30
July 1988

NEW TIMES

A SOVIET WEEKLY
OF WORLD AFFAIRS

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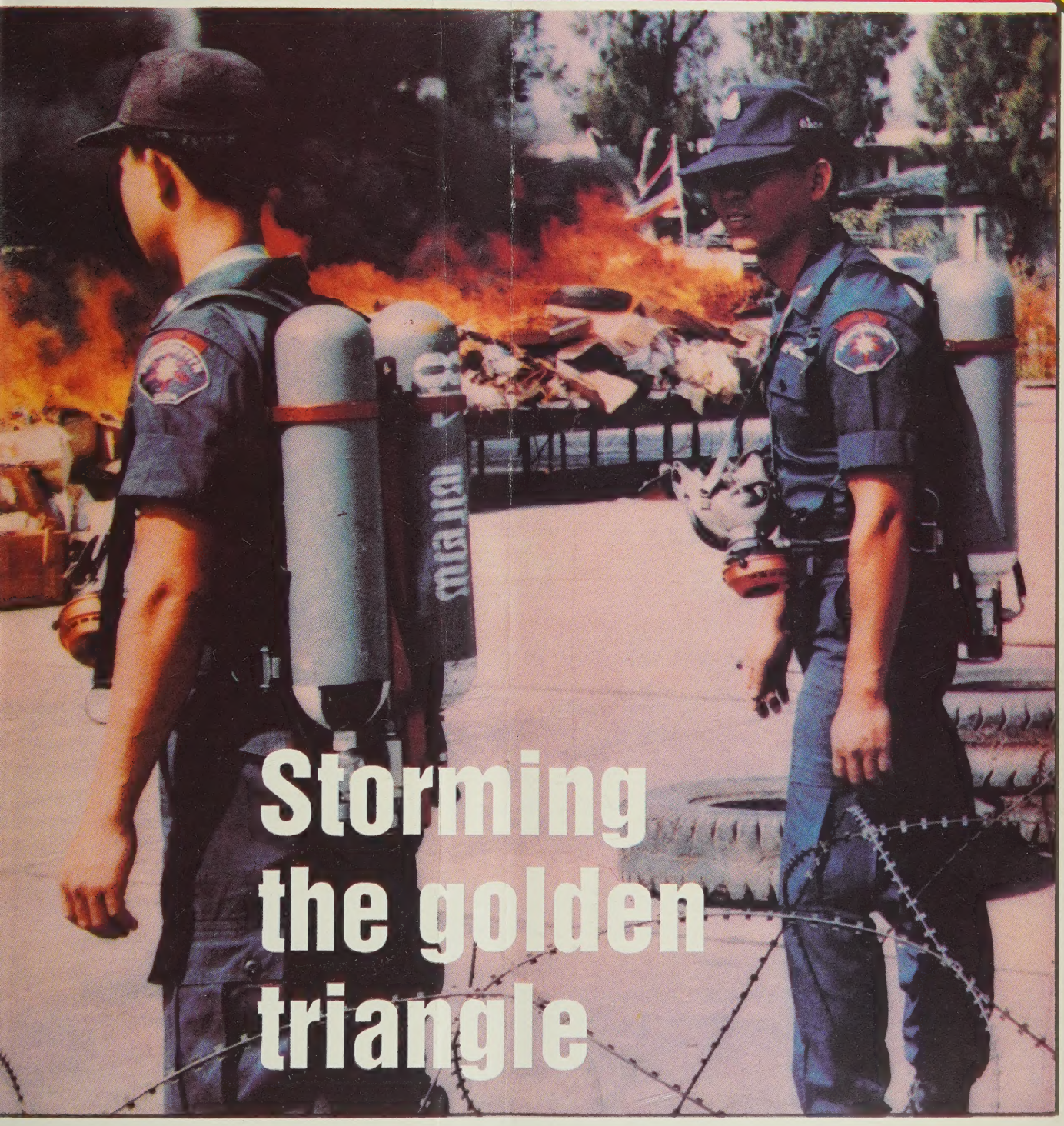

Storming the golden triangle

Lebanon. Political scene

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NEW TIMES

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The new proposals of the Warsaw Treaty states, adopted at the recent meeting of their Political Consultative Committee, have been brought before the public and partners in the future talks. What is the West's reaction to them?

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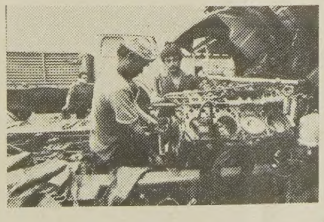

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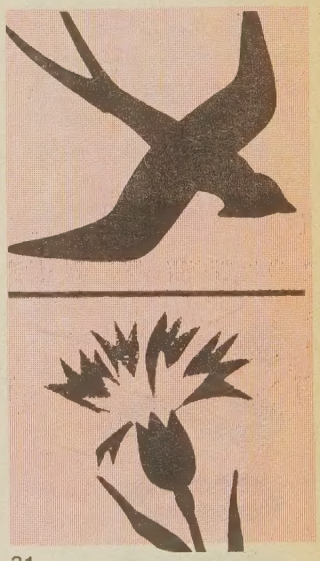

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Cover by Boris Cheknonin

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OPINIONS

Mary Wolfe
U.S.A.

■ I am not giving my address because there is no need to respond to me personally. I am not writing this letter for any one person. This is an idea that you must reflect on.

Perhaps one of the reasons that peace is so difficult to obtain is that people are always discussing their "differences." Maybe, together we can find a way to explore our simmilarities.

There isn't a person on this planet that doesn't have (or hasn't had) a family. All of us need proper nutrition, shelter and education. We all share interests in agriculture, medical and scientific research, sports, the arts, ecology, technological advances.

Is there anyone who wouldn't like to see a cure for cancer or AIDS, or clean air, water and land? Or the saving from extinction of the many species of life on this planet? There are so many things that we all enjoy, desire and search for – and we could work together on them.

I think it's possible for modern man to acknowledge the differences of another, but put them aside. Our psychology, mentality and common sense allow us to behave in this way.

E. Gukalov,
former Air Force navigator,
Voroshilovgrad, U.S.S.R.

■ I was prompted to write this letter by an interview published in issue No 18/88 under the heading "The state, law and the individual." Your reporter Lev Yelin talked with Prof. Valery Savitsky, head of department at the State and Law Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. The professor describes how laws have been drawn up and enforced in our country both in the past and at present, and how it will be done in the future. The entire article is imbued with the spirit of new thinking.

The Soviet people remember the times of the personality cult, stagnation and arbitrary rule, when the laws were devalued. That is why I especially liked the idea expressed by Prof. Savitsky, namely, that "laws are not to be substituted for or replaced with arbitrary decisions by individuals."

V. Chebukin
Kharkov Region, U.S.S.R.

■ Issue No. 24 carried an interview given by U.S. Defence Secretary Frank Carlucci to New Times reporter Galina Sidorova. Carlucci spoke of many things. He clearly indicated, in particular, that the Soviet people have little information about their military establishment. I think the Defence Secretary is quite right, for one in ten Soviet citizens probably knows the exact strength of the U.S. and NATO armed forces, the amount of the weapons they have, and the geographical position of American military bases, but knows much less about the potential and power of the Soviet armed forces.

I believe that in our time of glasnost the Soviet people should be given the chance to know more about their army.

A MATTER AT ISSUE

Vladimir Ganshin
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ Geographers will say that there is no such town in Mongolia as Tamtsak Bulak. They will be right, but only partly. There, on the vast grass-covered steppe, the land has been torn up by fire and communication trenches and pillboxes. A little farther rise the stone frames of the buildings of a hospital, barracks and dumps.

All this has remained since 1939, when Soviet and Mongolian troops fought against the Japanese army. The main forces of the Soviet troops – the 17th, 39th and 53rd infantry armies which delivered a crushing blow at the Kwantung Army in the Khingan-Mukden direction – were concentrated there in August 1945.

Perhaps it is profoundly symbolic that grain crops are sown in the former battlefields, cattle graze near the trenches overgrown with grass, and the burnt tanks are used for scrap.

The memory of the fallen heroes lives in Mongolia. A majestic complex has been erected on Khalkhin Gol to commemorate their feat. It is carefully preserved by our Mongolian friends.

But Tamtsak Bulak lies far from Khalkhin Gol. The obelisks have collapsed, the fences have been broken, and the graves are overgrown with weeds. It is hard to discern names on the plates scattered around and covered with earth. "Here lie Guards Sergeants Sidorenko Z.I and Balabukh F.O. They fell while fulfilling their duty" reads one of the inscriptions. Do the relatives of Lieutenant A.A. Eliseyev know that their son or brother died at Tamtsak Bulak? Or is this known by the close kindred of Victor Lychko, who died at the age of 22?

Tamtsak Bulak is situated in the Eastern Province of Mongolia. Many Soviet children study in Choibalsan, the administrative centre of the province, and, I am sure, their Young Pioneer and Young Communist League leaders have more than once wondered what social work they could do. I would advise them to go to the dead town one day, restore the graves and plant flowers. They could perhaps be assisted in this by the Soviet troops stationed in Mongolia.

Grigory Erineyev
Chernovtsy Region, U.S.S.R.

■ I worked as chief economist at my state farm for 17 years. Though now retired, I

GLASNOST

maintain ties with my work collective as deputy secretary of the Party branch. All the economic problems described by G. Parasol in his letter (issue No. 22/88) are familiar to me.

I completely disagree with the division of our society into working people and swindlers. There are of course swindlers as well as murderers in our country. But do they constitute a whole stratum? Of course not. They are simply criminals, and the relevant bodies deal with them.

Parasol writes about bribery and speculation. The two evils will exist for as long as society itself encourages them. For instance, a customer who asks the butcher to give her a better cut of meat pays him an extra ruble a kilo. Hundreds of customers come to a shop and, by overpaying for meat, engender the very evils they are opposed to. Can't hundreds of customers influence one salesman?

The proposed raising of food prices has been criticized by Parasol as an arbitrary decision. The problem should be examined in its entirety, however, and only then will the need for price increases be understood. For the rise in wages and grants, the improvement of the pension scheme, the expansion of the health service and, most importantly, the provision of more flats for the population are all linked with the economy.

CARRY ON THE DISCUSSION

Silvio Sarzi-Sartori
San Remo, Italy

■ To reader F. Ozersky from Vologda (issue No. 19/88): I am not a Russian who has assumed a fancy Italian name, as you suppose. I am an Italian born in Lombardy. For 40 years I have lived in the beautiful town of San Remo. I shall explain once more what I wanted to say in my letter published in issue No. 15/88. The Soviet press devotes too much attention to "historic" issues, almost relishing the description of crimes committed in the years of the personality cult. To see only crimes, atrocities and fraud and overlook the positive results means to distort history.

R. Venugopal
Korba, India

■ I think the question of filling in the blanks in your history should be treated seriously. It is not the same as "raking up" the past, which seems a narrow-minded approach to me. No single nation, especially one building socialism, can allow itself to have blanks in textbooks and other works on history. Obliviousness to this fact is just one more way of denying the people the right to know the whole truth.

I would like to say, however, that if you want to free people of their dogmatic attachment to the Stalinist model of socialism, the worst thing you can do is prevent them from reading Stalin's works. I do not propose returning Stalin to the pedestal. However, mere statements that he replaced the Leninist model of socialism with his own will prove pointless unless people themselves have an opportunity to read his works and draw their own conclusions.

Anatoly Zherdev
Gomel, U.S.S.R.

■ I have learned from New Times that even some of its readers abroad exonerate Stalinism. I think Stalinism or any other tyranny can only be defended by those who are not moved by the grief and tears of other people. For no one will tolerate slander or repression against himself.

The infection of society with vices is one of the worst consequences of despotism. The most terrible of these vices are fear and indifference. This explains why the going is hard for the process of democratization in our country.

Stalin is said to have solved many problems. But that is not so. He was sensible but had little education and surrounded himself with worthless people blindly devoted to him. Were they capable of choosing the only correct course of development? Of course not. The policy of Stalin and his associates undermined the forces of socialism within the country and damaged the prestige of socialism on the world scene. In the 1941-45 war the nazis had a real opportunity to defeat the Soviet Union because the army command had been decapitated.

This is what I wanted to tell our foreign readers vacillating between Stalinism and socialism.

S. Rubtsov
Novokuznetsk, U.S.S.R.

■ Stalinism as a system of political thinking and practical activity must undoubtedly be condemned as pseudo-socialist in its essence. It is much closer to the theory whose main principle is "the end justifies the means" than to genuine socialism. It is impossible to carry perestroika through without the complete denunciation and careful analysis of these phenomena.

The minds of many people are still influenced by Stalinist schemes and notions. The political rehabilitation of Lenin's followers and the study of their views have already dealt a considerable blow to Stalinism. Without revising our attitude to some of our former leaders and reappraising the country's historical past we shall in the end be stifled in the atmosphere of a new personality cult and then ask themselves in surprise: what has happened to perestroika?

GLASNOST

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PRIVATE OPINION

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

ARTUR SANDAUER, Polish writer

Poland has never known such a significant and frank visit by a Soviet leader. The novelty is the very fact that such a visit has taken place. It has been inconceivable up till now that Poles would greet a Soviet leader with enthusiastic singing and that such singing would be welcomed with applause. It could not have been imagined either that any of the previous general secretaries of the CPSU could be asked sharp questions and drawn into arguments. That was possible with Mikhail Gorbachev.

In Russian the word "mir" means both peace and the world, and Gorbachev is working for mir in both senses of the word.

I know Poland well, and can emphatically assert that the visit has raised a huge wave of sympathy for Gorbachev and the Soviet Union. We attach great importance to this fact because the U.S.S.R. is our largest economic partner and neighbour. In the similarity between the economic reforms and moves towards political democratization in our countries we see an opportunity to overcome the crisis and embark on a course of all-round progress as soon as possible. The visit has provided reliable conditions for mutual trust, and that, in my opinion, is extremely important.

B.M. DIAH, publisher and editor-in-chief of Merdeka, Indonesia

I remember the interview Mikhail Gorbachev granted to our newspaper exactly a year ago. As I said then, the meeting with the Soviet leader was for me the climax of my half-century of activity as a journalist.

The interview mainly concerned problems in the Asian-Pacific region and ways of implementing the initiatives put forward by the Soviet leader in Vladivostok. Not a few changes for the better have occurred in the region and the world over the past year.

The December conference of the Association of South East Asian Nations, of which Indonesia is a member, reaffirmed the policy of establishing a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in our region. The Philippines has included in its Constitution a provision barring the entry of foreign ships with nuclear weapons on board in the territorial waters of the country. Filipinos are insisting that their government demand the evacuation of American military bases. With the help of Indonesia and some other countries, initial steps have at least been taken towards a settlement of the Kampuchean conflict. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines have stepped up their political, commercial, economic and cultural ties with the Soviet Union.

I am pleased to note that the Soviet leader informed the world through our newspaper about Moscow's readiness to eliminate the medium-range missiles in the Asian part of the U.S.S.R. This helped elaborate the Soviet-American treaty on the complete abolition of medium- and shorter-range missiles.

We are impatiently awaiting an early conclusion between Moscow and Washington of an agreement on a 50 per cent reduction in their strategic offensive missiles.

BERNHARD VOGEL, President of the Bundesrat, Chief Minister of Rhineland–Palatinate, Federal Republic of Germany

I have arrived in Moscow at a crucial time: changes are taking place in the U.S.S.R. and a Soviet-American agreement on disarmament has been concluded. I hope all this will help make relations between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union even closer and more intensive than before, the more so as the Federal Chancellor is expected to visit the U.S.S.R. in October and a visit by Mikhail Gorbachev to Bonn is planned for next spring.

In the past few months our relations have also continued to improve because the Soviet Union has begun to allow more Germans to emigrate to the Federal Republic. This has been our long-standing request. Economic ties have also been intensified. There is, however, no limit to improvement. In a conversation with Anatoly Dobrynin, for instance, I spoke of new prospects opening up. Official relations are being established between the European Economic Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Both sides are very interested in closer cooperation, though this is not easy because of the difference in our systems.

Joint ventures provide one of the most favourable opportunities for mutually advantageous cooperation. I was glad to learn that the number of Soviet-West German enterprises had increased. Our aim is to impel more people studying economics and acquiring technical trades to show interest in the Soviet Union, study Russian, and establish contacts. One of the prerequisites for organizing joint ventures is the extension of relations between Soviet people and West Germans.

Chief Soviet delegate Mikhail Gorbachev signing the documents of the meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee.

The Warsaw Appeal

A programme of military détente from the Atlantic to the Urals

What proposals did the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty countries put forward at its conference? Are its initiatives realistic? What was the reaction of possible partners at such talks?

The participants in the Warsaw conference paid special attention to the situation in Europe and tabled detailed concrete proposals designed to reduce the level of military confrontation between the blocs. It suggested that talks be started without delay, as early as this year, on a radical reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments from the Atlantic to the Urals.

What concrete proposals have the Warsaw pact countries put forward?

The Warsaw plan is made up of three components.

First – **achieving equality in armed forces at a lower level.** This could be done in stages both at general European and regional levels. Attention should be concentrated on removing the imbalance and asymmetry in separate types of armament and armed forces of the two blocs as a whole. If the two military-political alliances proved successful in doing this, it would then be possible – again on a mutual basis – substantially to reduce the number of troops and weapons.

At the second stage the armed forces of each side would be reduced by about a quarter, which would mean the demobilization of half a million people with their weapons on either side of the former Iron Curtain. The reduction would be continued at the third stage, and armed forces turned into strictly defensive formations.

And from the moment talks begin on this subject right up until the agreements reached at them come into force, the participants would undertake not to do anything that run counter to the aims of the talks; specifically, not to increase their armed forces or armaments from the Atlantic to the Urals. And after the agreements entered into force, they would pledge not to increase their armed forces and armaments in the areas left out of the initial talks.

The second important component is **preventing surprise attacks.** This is an inseparable part of the process of cutting back armed forces and armaments. Therefore, starting from the first stage, there would be sense in creating zones on both sides of the line where the two blocs meet with a reduced level of armaments. The depth of each zone could be agreed on, depending on the characteristics of the main types of armament, geostrategic factors and other criteria. The most destabilizing types of weapon could be withdrawn (or reduced in numbers) in these zones. That would leave a purely defensive potential that would rule out the possibility of surprise attacks.

Such moves would of course be accompanied by concrete confidence building measures.

Finally, the third component – **the exchange of information and control.** Without these, radical cuts are impossible. That is why right from the start of the talks – or if possible even before they get under way – an exchange of initial data should be arranged to determine the cor-

relation of forces, as well as imbalances and asymmetries. Naturally, provision should be made for inspectors to check these data on the spot. As for control over observance of the agreements to be concluded at the talks, a system of control should be set up using national technical facilities and international procedures, including compulsory on-site inspection.

The Statement makes a special point of underlining that an important means of reducing the military danger would be to reduce and subsequently completely abolish tactical nuclear weapons, including dual-purpose arms. The socialist countries are prepared to enter into negotiations on this issue.

That is the plan. Comparing it with those put forward at the conferences of the Political Consultative Committee in Budapest in 1986 and in Berlin last year, one notices how creatively the members of the Warsaw Treaty approach the most important issues of our day.

Historians writing about the events of our time will note that the conference in Warsaw was held when the process of real nuclear disarmament was just getting off the ground.

The Soviet-American INF treaty was a first step towards destroying two classes of monstrous weapons. But it was only a beginning, the first albeit immense achievement of the new thinking. Consequently, as the Warsaw communiqué points out, this first important measure of genuine disiarmament must be followed up by other agreements in this field and, in particular, on a substantial reduction in nuclear weapons, all down to their complete elimination. That is why the allied socialist countries believe priority should go to a treaty on a 50-per cent cut in the strategic offensive weapons of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. (with strict observance of the ABM Treaty in the form in which it was signed in 1972, and abidance by it for an agreed period). The latest round of Soviet-American talks on this problem began recently in Geneva.

However, one cannot feel quite happy about actions that could complicate, or halt altogether, the entire disarmament process. Among such actions are NATO's plans to compensate for medium- and shorter-range missiles by building up and modernizing other types of armament.

Such plans concern Europe, first and foremost a continent which, has already stockpiled much more weapons of different types than could ever be needed, and where any armed conflict would escalate to become a global catastrophe.

How were the new Warsaw Treaty proposals met at NATO headquarters? What do they think there of a general European Reykjavik – a meeting of all European countries to resolve a single issue – how to move on from words to deeds on conventional armaments?

A proposal suggesting such a meeting was made by Mikhail Gorbachev in Warsaw on the eve of the conference of the Political Consultative Committee.

We got in touch with Brussels.

NATO: nothing to offer

"I say: 'Yes, please,' to Gorbachev's offer of a European summit," says Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Thorvald Staltenberg in reply to the new Soviet initiative. French President François Mitterrand said it was "an interesting one."

However, far from all Western politicians have such ideas. Washington and London officialdom as well as NATO's headquarters in Brussels have cold-shouldered the initiative. The official spokesman of the U.S. State Department said that such a forum would be of little use.

But if the U.S.S.R. – U.S. summit led to the INF agreement, why shouldn't an all-European summit reach accord in conventional armaments? If the dialogue between the Soviet and American leaders was, in the public consensus, of great benefit, why aren't we entitled to expect similar results from a European Reykjavik.

NATO's official spokesman trotted out, as the basic argument of all opposed to a dialogue of this nature, the view that "proposal for a European summit excluding the United States and Canada in these negotiations is not acceptable to NATO." Some Western politicians and newsmen see the Soviet proposal as the East's intention to drive a wedge between Old and New Worlds.

Though there is nothing novel about these apprehensions, they are unfounded. The Soviet initiative was prompted not by any wish to decouple Western Europe from the U.S., but by the desire to jolt the problem of reducing non-nuclear arms out of its state of inertia, by the wish to turn from word to deed. As for U.S. and Canadian representation in an all-European summit, nobody has been opposed to it.

NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner promised to study "with care" the new initiatives of the U.S.S.R. and its allies for the reduction of

In just three years...

Initiatives of the U.S.S.R. and its allies

1985

September. The G.D.R. and Czechoslovak governments present the F.R.G. government with a proposal to begin talks to establish a chemical weapon-free zone in Central Europe.

December. Bulgaria and Romania propose converting the Balkans into a chemical weapon-free zone.

1986

January, February. The U.S.S.R. sets out a programme for the phased advance towards a nuclear-free world by the start of the 21st century plus the concept of an all-inclusive system of international security incorporating as its basic component the reduction, followed by their subsequent abolition, of nuclear armaments in Europe. It reaffirms its readiness to accept the broadest measures for nuclear disarmament control.

February. At the Vienna talks the socialist countries table a draft agreement for cuts in U.S.S.R. and U.S. troop contingents in Central Europe.

June. At its Budapest meeting the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee adopts an appeal to NATO states for substantial reductions in troops and armaments from the Atlantic to the Urals.

1987

April. The Warsw Treaty states suggest to NATO member states that a moratorium be imposed on increased military spending.

May. With its Jaruzelski Plan the Polish

conventional armaments. At the same time though, he effectively rejected in principle the very idea of reciprocal air force cuts. "We need asymmetrical reductions, notably in tanks and artillery," he said, "in order to eliminate the most worrying disparities. A focus on aircraft does not meet this central requirement. On their own, aircraft do not capture and hold territory, a threat of particular concern to NATO."

One can understand Western desires to reduce and balance these components of the armed forces as here the East enjoys numerical superiority. The Political Consultative Committee has suggested that this problem be tackled within the first phase of a three-part plan for the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Europe. The socialist countries maintain that the disparities in all basic types of armament without exception be removed. But whenever a reduction to parity in armaments in which the West has an edge is mentioned, NATO representatives manoeuvre and argue that such weaponry does not represent much of a danger.

At the chemical troops training centre outside Moscow, the British experts, who had come on an exchange visit after their Soviet counterparts visited the British bacteriological research centre in Porton Down, were shown the entire arsenal of means of chemical defence in action. Such exchanges unquestionably consolidate mutual confidence. Meanwhile confidence and security are the two sides of one coin.

Flora Lewis, a leading U.S. newswoman used the term "hypocritical" to describe the argument that aircraft should not be discussed at talks on the reduction of conventional arms, inasmuch as they did not capture and hold territories. "Planes," she said, "are certainly an integral part of battle forces essential to a surprise attack."

In Warsaw the Warsaw Treaty countries urged the NATO states not to delay talks on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Europe and to start such talks this year. However, is the West prepared to do that? I personally am extremely doubtful. On the one hand, NATO leaders have time and again noted their wish for the earliest solution of the conventional arms problem. In a recent "ex cathedra" speech NATO Secretary-General Wörner called this a "highest priority." On the other hand, NATO has yet to offer anything concrete. At present it is diplomatically empty-handed. Despite two years of work, the specially created NATO High Level Task Force has yet to come up with a formula for future talks.

Such sluggishness has met with censure. Even the most orthodox NATOites voice concern. Thus Nouvelles Atlantiques which is closely associated with NATO warns of "growing public dissatisfaction with the failure so far to come up with concrete proposals and with West's apparent incapacity to respond to the increasing number of Soviet proposals, which have a favourable impact on Western public opinion."

government proposes withdrawing from advance posts and slashing nuclear and conventional armaments over an extensive zone in Europe embracing the territories of Poland, the G.D.R., Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the F.R.G., Benelux and Denmark. First to be withdrawn are those types of weapon seen as best suited to surprise attack.

May. In Berlin the Political Consultative Committee tables comprehensive proposals to lower the levels of military confrontation and reduce armaments and armed forces in Europe and the military expenditure of the European states. These proposals incorporate and summarize earlier proposals. Simultaneously it is proposed that consultations be arranged with the NATO countries to compare military doctrines so as to minimize suspicion and confrontation.

October. The U.S.S.R. proposes lowering military confrontation and reducing armed forces and naval activity in Northern Europe, the Arctic and other adjacent regions, granting Northern Europe the status of a nuclear-free zone, and converting it into a zone of peace, security, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations.

1988

January. The G.D.R. leadership proposes to the F.R.G. government that nuclear missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometres be eliminated in the territories of the two Germanies.

February. With its Jakeš Plan the Czechoslovak government proposes zones of confidence, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations along the lines of contact between the two blocs.

March. The U.S.S.R. comes out with the initiative to make the Mediterranean a zone of peace, security and cooperation.

Such a NATO response is not surprising. Still, a reassessment of values has begun and in that respect the attitude West German leaders have taken to the Warsaw appeal is significant.

Can we afford to delay?

Putting aside the utterances of certain incorrigible "concrete-headed" conservatives from the Christian parties in the ruling coalition, the response of the West German leaders can be qualified on the whole as a restrained affirmative, that is, restrained in the case of Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl and affirmative in the case of Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. However, both think a serious approach should be taken to the Warsaw Treaty proposals.

The Bonn chief has "noted" with satisfaction, according to the General-Anzeiger, the circumstance that the Warsaw Treaty decisions imply a still closer approximation of positions between East and West. He is particularly hopeful that the Warsaw Treaty's preparedness to undertake "the most constructive efforts," will be reflected at the Vienna meeting of the member states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. As Helmut Kohl has emphasized, actions must follow what has been proposed and said. He agrees that the West, especially the F.R.G., inasmuch as it will be first to be involved in the reduction of conventional arms and armaments, must take a very serious approach to the Warsaw initiatives.

So when will the answer come? Helmut Kohl sees no reason for rushing things; he advises waiting for the outcome of the U.S. presidential elections in November. Disarmament has a point he has observed, only if it gradually ensures greater, not lesser, security. Though that is quite logical, why wait till November? Just to gain the backing of the new U.S. administration?

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, on the other hand, has presented a more explicit view. He has unreservedly qualified the Warsaw proposals as a positive contribution to disarmament discussions and the development of East-West relations generally, emphasizing that he welcomes the Warsaw Treaty statement calling for the earliest completion of the Vienna meeting, as paving the way for talks on the reduction of conventional arms and armed forces.

In his appraisal of the Warsaw proposals, the F.R.G. Foreign Minister did not miss the opportunity to note that in this manner the Warsaw Treaty had responded "constructively" to the NATO Brussels declaration of December 1986. The Federal government, he said, welcomes the fact that Bonn's asymmetrical disarmament proposals, which would gradually result in equilowered ceilings, had now found support in the East. The same could be said of the West German demand to start talks on "stability in conventional arms" before the end of the year and eventually slash the armed forces of the two sides to levels making exclusively for defensive operation. He is of the belief that future agreements should extend over the entire area from the Atlantic to the Urals, so that no zones of differing security emerge.

Like Helmut Kohl, the Vice-Chancellor has assured the Warsaw Treaty that the West is serious in its attitude to the Warsaw decisions and will subject them to serious study. The question is how long this will take and whether the arguments about authorship of one or other suggestion for disarmament obscure the real issue.

The point of course is not who has actually authored one or other proposal in such a sensitive area as disarmament. The basic requirement is for this or that proposal to be constructive, to help overcome suspicion, and do away with military confrontation. Hence the Warsaw Treaty countries are also prepared to discuss other possible options serving to reinforce stability in Europe at lower armed forces and armaments levels. Incidentally, when drafting their initiatives, the U.S.S.R. and its allies had over the past few years taken account of many of the wishes, concerns and apprehensions of their Western partners.

If we seek to consolidate security in Europe and throughout the world, there is today no alternative to a frank and honest dialogue, the desire to understand one another's interests. Today we can have only civilized relations between countries, as only then will it be possible, by pulling together, to build that "common European home," in which good-neighbourly relations and confidence would reign. The foundation already exists, in the form of the Helsinki Final Act, the entire process initiated in the Finnish capital, and the achievements of recent years that have become realities thanks to the new political thinking.

Material prepared by R. Zolotarev and D. Pogorzhelsky in Moscow, with V. Boikov in Brussels, and N. Zholkver in Bonn.

Make the figures public,

says Walter Stützle, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

New Times. Mr Stützle, currently the blocs are energetically debating asymmetries, imbalances, and the exchange of data. How would you assess these discussions?

Walter Stützle. Firstly, asymmetries exist. Secondly, it is imperative to exchange data. Thirdly, such data must not only be exchanged between governments; all such data must be made public. My impression is that the present Soviet leadership, unlike the previous leadership, is prepared to place its cards face upwards on the table. Yet confidence must be established among the public as well. Today, when the Soviet Union is prepared to do what NATO has long urged it to do, the NATO countries are suddenly displaying a certain degree of hesitation when the matter is raised, I frankly cannot understand the reason for this.

N.T. How does SIPRI assess the imbalances and asymmetries in Europe?

W.S. Our evaluations are based on Western data so far published. Regrettably, we have as yet no Soviet data. Hence, proceeding from Western sources, I infer that the U.S.S.R. has a perceptible superiority in, for instance, tanks, about which so much has been said of late, as well as in anti-aircraft defences. I think it would be in the Soviet interest as well as in the interests of arms control and reduction to make the figures public, as then we would have an impartial picture.

N.T. Take control. Today West and East have switched positions, with the East proposing what the West itself proposed only recently. Now the West does not agree.

W.S. I was glad to hear that in conventional arms as well the Soviet Union is prepared to accept on-site inspection. That is a very important step forward. However, there is a long way to go before it is absolutely clear how arms control is effected, as unlike nuclear weapons, this concerns large numbers of armed forces and armaments and a wide geographical area. The decisive issue that both governments and scientific institutes must elucidate is what to control. When that matter has been decided, one will be able to say what technical measures are needed. If these technical measures have still not been developed, then that will have to be done...

TASS photo

A Soviet marshal in the Pentagon

Only recently the idea of a Soviet marshal making a tour of the United States would have seemed incredible.

* *Retranslated from the Russian*

Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces and First Deputy Minister of Defence, recently visited the United States at the invitation of William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He toured the United States, saw U.S. Army equipment and visited Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier and was received by President Reagan at the White House.

After the visit Crowe and Akhromeyev held a press conference in the Pentagon.*

William Crowe. When Marshal Akhromeyev began his visit to America last week, I wanted him to meet people in our country, especially young men and women serving in the armed forces because, in my opinion, there is no better way of understanding the immense strength of the United States than meeting its ordinary citizens. And now the visit is coming to an end.

The agreement was reached on a number of issues that will substantially help expand contacts between the military of the two countries in the future and, I hope, reduce the possibility of dangerous incidents between our armed forces.

Sergei Akhromeyev. Our visit is drawing to a close. The Soviet delegation had set itself three tasks. In my opinion, they have been achieved thanks to Admiral Crowe's thorough preparation for the visit. A plan for military contacts in 1988-90 was put into action. Moreover, agreement was reached on the content of a joint statement on the work of Soviet-American groups to prevent dangerous activity of the armed forces of both countries in relation to each other.

The admiral and me spent a week together, talking for hours.

We did not hold talks in the full sense of the word. Neither of us had been instructed by our governments to do so. We thoroughly analyzed the causes of anxiety displayed by one side in relation to the other in the military sphere. I can assure you that we had extremely frank conversations, and I am sure they will be useful for us in this respect in the future. Our second task was to take a look at the U.S. armed forces. Besides, we met generals, officers and privates. We were given the opportunity to talk with anyone we liked and to put any questions. I told the President that human rights – the rights of a Soviet citizen in the United States – had not been violated. We put any questions and received answers to them. We saw that U.S. servicemen approve of the policy being pursued by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Reagan. Our third task was to meet Americans and, thanks to the admiral, we were able to do so. We met hundreds of people, talked with them, and replied to their questions. They also approve of the policy of the American and Soviet leaders for improving the relations between our two countries. We learned much that was new about America and Americans. I think it will be useful for us in our work too...

Marshal Akhromeyev was asked why – though the Soviet Union is reportedly changing its military doctrine – American officials say they see no tangible signs of change. He was also asked how true was the U.S. intelligence report on the possible partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.

S. Ak. Perestroika has affected everyone in our country, including the armed forces and in the course of it Soviet military doctrine has assumed a defensive character both in form and content. In the past, while being essentially defensive, it envisaged in form both defensive and offensive operations. At present, we are reconsidering our ideas in the sense that our doctrine and strategy should have a purely defensive character. We have understood that our methods of military training caused anxiety, especially in Europe, and we have taken this into account. In keeping with the new doctrine we are beginning a readjustment of our armed forces to impart a defensive character to their structure. This will take considerable time. Furthermore, cuts in the armed forces, the reduction of tension, and the full implementation of a defensive doctrine are only possible on a bilateral basis. That is why it is necessary to start

Marshal
Sergei Akhromeyev
was born in 1923. Joining the army in 1940, he served in the Great Patriotic War, graduated from the armoured forces and General Staff academies after the war, and has held various military command and staff posts.

In 1979 Akhromeyev was appointed first deputy chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, and in 1984, Chief of the General Staff and first deputy Minister of Defence.

Sergei Akhromeyev is a Hero of the Soviet Union, a Lenin prize winner (1980), a member of the party's Central Committee, and a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Soviet of the Union, a chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

Admiral
William James Crowe
was born in 1925. In 1946 he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, and in 1956 from Stanford University. In 1965 he received Ph. D. in political science from Princeton University.

William Crowe began his career in the Navy in 1946. He has served as commander of a submarine division in San Diego, a senior naval adviser in South Vietnam, director of the East Asia and Pacific region office of the Secretary of Defence, and commander-in-chief of NATO's forces in Southern Europe.

In 1985 he was appointed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has been decorated several times and is married with three children – two sons and daughter.

talks and reach agreements.

As for the intelligence reports on the partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, I can make no comment on them: the intelligence services concerned are not subordinate to me and do not provide me with information.

Marshal Akhromeyev was aksed to produce evidence showing that changes are indeed taking place. In particular, he was asked whether the mobile task forces would be disbanded in East Germany.

S. Ak. I can say with all responsibility that there is no mobile task forces in the German Democratic Republic. If such a force does exist, it is located in the Soviet Union; and within the terms of the question I am giving you an honest answer.

In view of reports on new armed attacks in Afghanistan, the Marshal was asked whether Soviet troops were being evacuated from that country as smoothly as had been hoped and whether the losses were greater than expected.

S. Ak. The withdrawal of Soviet troops is proceeding according to schedule. However, the Soviet Union is seriously displeased with the way Pakistan is fulfilling its obligations. The border remains open, and armed groups are infiltrating into Afghanistan. The opposition training centres continue to operate in Pakistan.

Marshal Akhromeyev was asked to comment on Admiral Crowe's statement that the scale of Soviet naval operations had been reduced in the last two years.

S. Ak. It is accounted for by the defensive character of Soviet military doctrine.

W. C. In conclusion I'd like to say that Marshal Akhromeyev was a very agreeable guest. I wish him all the best.

S. Ak. Admiral Crowe was a wonderful host, who accorded me a hospitable welcome and ensured an excellent visit.

A reminder of WW II alliance

American AEROCOBRA fighters and DOUGLAS cargo planes took part in the fighting on the Soviet-German front.

Photo from the catalog of American engineering and industry. 1942

Ivan Cherkasov, a factory worker from Efremov, Tula region, sent a copy of the catalog to Mikhail Gorbachev shortly before the Soviet-American summit in Moscow.

Ivan Cherkasov wrote in his letter that at one of Mikahil Gorbachev's meetings with American journalists they asked him whether anything about the United States was known in the Soviet Union. "Yes, we know a great deal about the United States," Ivan Cherkasov said. "Please, show them this book. They may recall that there was a time when relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were good at a moment of trial for this country."

The Catalog of American Engineering and Industry amazed me with its openness and candour. American companies and the military gave the Soviet editors of the catalog a very good idea of the industrial and military potential of the United States at the time. The catalog lists the technical specifications of machine tools, equipment, radio equipment, and even television, a technological novelty at the time. It lists the production capacities of factories and plants and the combat specifications of aircraft. In other words, it gives complete information about all that has been classified as top secret by NATO's Coordinating Committee for Control of Strategic Exports to Communist Countries, or COCOM, since the late 1940s. The catalog also gives an ample idea of the potlential of the US economy for rapid mobilization. The US economy converted to the full-scale manufacture of military hardware in the space of a few months.

Some of the weapons produced in the United States at the time complemented the arsenals of the Soviet Army fighting against the nazis. In spite of the fact that the proportion of military hardware supplied to us by the United States and the Allies accounted for a mere 4 per cent of the output of the Soviet war industry, these arms supplies made a telling contribution to victory over Hitler's Germany.

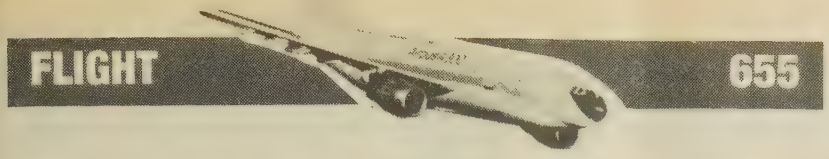
Having leafed through the catalog a journalist specializing in arms control came up with an unexpected comment: "It reminds me of the publications of the Soviet Defense Ministry in the 'Whence the Threat to Peace' series and, come to think of it, of the Pentagon's reports on the Soviet military strength," he said, "but of course we are dealing with a different kind of technology now..."

My own view is that the book, a relic from the times of WW II, is more suitable for political, rather than military comparisons. Ivan Cherkasov is right when he says that there was a time when relations between the two countries were good. There was a time when there was trust and open discussion even with regard to military and technological issues. At that time the two countries faced a common threat and that dictated the need to upgrade their military technology, and also induced them to convert their economies rapidly to the manufacture of weapons and military hardware.

Aren't we facing a common threat today as well? Yes, we are. That threat is enormous, for the stockpiles of all kinds of nuclear and conventional weapons today defy the wildest flights of the imagination in their devastating power. Both the Soviet Union and the United States have overburdened their economies with a wasteful arms race. In order to deal with that threat we must above all have openness and a great deal of trust. Without them the process of phased disarmament may grind to a halt. This is indicated beyond any doubt by the experience of the Soviet-American INF talks, the talks on strategic offensive and space weapons in Geneva and the emerging personal contacts between the representatives of the supreme military command of the two countries.

If we manage to achieve opennes and trust on the scale at least of our alliance during WW II we will be able to accelerate the process of disarmament. The idea is not to demolilsh our military-industrial potential, but gradually to convert it to civilian purposes as more and more agreements are reached on reducing one class of weapon or another. The Soviet Union is already exploring ways of converting its own military industries with that goal in mind, and that it is not going to be an easy task (see p.19 of this issue). Greater cooperation between Soviet and American manufacturers would no doubt be a factor facilitating that process. COCOM notwithstanding, the interest on the part of American business circles and Soviet industrialists in that cooperation is as great as it was before and during the war. Perhaps it might be a good idea to compile another catalog now with a view to restructuring military industries for civilian producltion?

Felix Goryunov,
economics analyst



The logic of an "error"

Military thinking strikes again

The initial shock is over. The bodies of the dead recovered from the waters of the Gulf have been buried. President Reagan has expressed regret and said that compensation will be paid. The American military has said the incident was an error. Can the matter now be closed? Regrettably, no. Following the shooting down of the Iranian airbus, the United States has said on numerous occasions that it is not going to change its policies in the Gulf. The 298 people killed instantaneously in the tragedy has set a murderous record in the Gulf war.

Captain Will Rogers assumed full responsibility for the incident when he reported it to the Fleet Commander. He said he was seeking to protect his ship and men. Captain Rogers has been acquitted in the United States. Military thinking has won.

THE MILITARY VIEW

If you make a resumé of all the statements made by the Pentagon, its case boils down to the following:

The commander of the cruiser took a reasonable line of action. The USS Vincennes was engaged in combat with Iranian surface ships that threatened it and mistook the Iranian airliner for an F-14 fighter as it defended itself from an attack from the air in the Strait of Hormuz. Poor visibility made it possible to identify the aircraft only after it had been hit by a missile.

In order to understand the nature of the incident, it is necessary to analyze the situation in which U.S. naval ships have found themselves in the Gulf overall. The U.S. government said at the outset that the introduction of warships into the Gulf would be fraught with risks and uncertainties.

In September 1987, following the attack on the USS Stark and other incidents, a memorandum was issued to pilots advising them that ships of the U.S. Navy were taking additional precautions and that it was necessary for them to issue identification signals and notifications of intent.

The memorandum also said that if an aircraft fails to issue the appropriate identification signals it will be the target of countermeasures. The U.S. Navy was informed that Iranian ships were likely to attack U.S. naval ships in the Gulf in the run-up to Independence Day on July 4.

The commander of the cruiser took the correct precautions and, acting on the strength of the information at his disposal, he obeyed his orders in a reasonable way.

OBSERVER'S VIEW

Are there limits to escalation?

Dmitry Zgersky

Regional conflicts are dangerous because they can escalate into international conflicts. The Iran-Iraq war demonstrates this better than anything else. The hostilities have continued for over seven years, and from a narrow disputed strip near the Shatt al-Arab, the front line has extended hundreds of kilometres to the north. Missiles reach targets far from the front line, devastating cities in Iraq and Iran.

As the logic of the war unfolded, the hostilities increased step by step. Both countries have enough oil to sell and buy arms with the profits, so they have to stop each other selling fuel. The war moved to the Gulf, whose waters became covered with a shore-to-shore oil slick as damaged tankers lost their cargoes. The Iran-Iraq conflict ceased to be a local one.

At the initial stages, the United States was unwilling to get involved in the tanker war, but after a while Washington started talking of "Russian involvement" in the region. The argument was taken up and the U.S. Navy moved its forces into the Gulf.

On May 17, 1987, an American frigate on patrol was attacked by an Iraqi fighter-bomber. Thirty-seven memberes of her crew died. The Pentagon issued orders calling for greater vigilance and combat readiness.

On October 19, Iranian rockets hit the tanker Sea Isle City, which was flying an American flag. The Pentagon announced its readiness for a considered and commensurate response.

The White House said the U.S. Navy would make the Gulf a safer place. In 1987, however, when the U.S. Navy moved in, 178 ships came under attack, and 108 lives were lost. In 1986, 80 ships were attacked in the Gulf.

On July 3, 1988, U.S. rockets claimed the lives of 298 passengers and crew of an Iranian Airbus A-300.

Here is what Senator Brock Adams, a Democrat from Washington, has to say. "What we have in the Persian Gulf is an open-ended commitment. We do not know how to tell if we have won; we do not know how to tell if we have lost. All we know is that we are there and will be there for a long time."

Is this really the policy of a superpower in a major regional conflict?

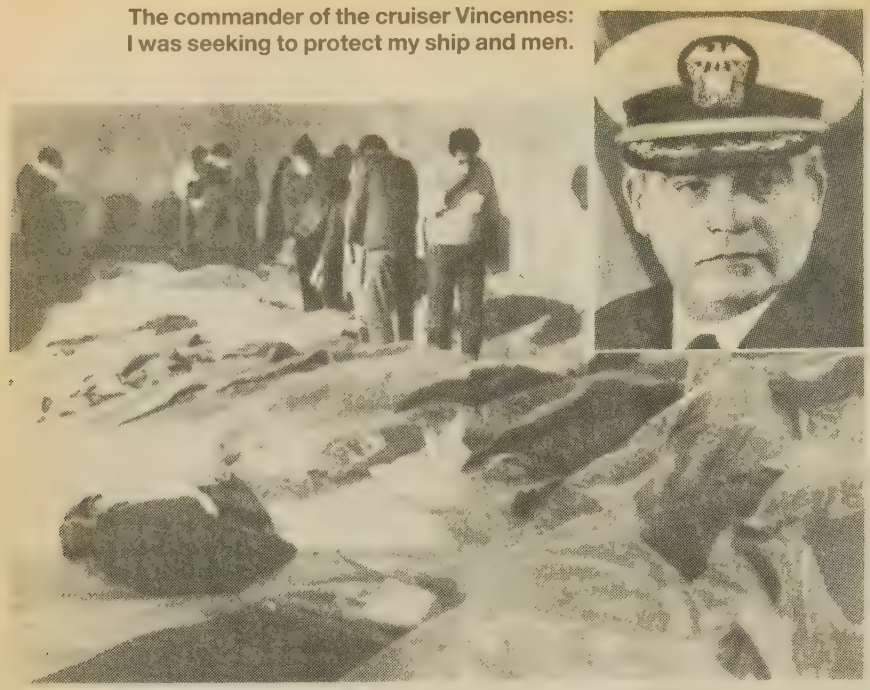
PSYCHOLOGIST'S VIEW

People must not be sacrificed

Igor Arievich, Cand, Sc. (Psych.)

I believe that the roots of the tragedy lie in a way of thinking peculiar to a certain part

The commander of the cruiser Vincennes: I was seeking to protect my ship and men.



of humanity. Here is an old test. Imagine that a fire has broken out in your house and you must now save your relatives. Who will you rush to save first, your newborn child, or your elderly mother?

Answers to that question reveal the distinction between what we now call new and old ways of thinking. The old way of thinking would tend to reason in, for instance, terms such as these: my mother has lived her life and the child must live, or, I can have another child, but I'll never have another mother. New thinking does not reason in such terms. According to it, there can be no rational consideration of such a problem because the statement is inhumane.

The old way of thinking reasons in terms of **utility,** equating it to a **value.** The new humanitarian way of thinking relies on universal humanitarian values. The new way of thinking holds every human life to be the supreme value that cannot be used as a means to achieve any goal, however noble.

The old psychological attitudes prevailed in politics until recently and they relied on the idea that the ends justify the means. It was that kind of attitude that resulted in the shooting down of the Iranian airliner. Taking into account the present situation in the Gulf, it can be said that the tragedy was programmed. The military mind is the quintessence of the old way of political thinking, which is prepared to accept violence and even war as a means to achieve its ends. Resorting to this means at a time of crisis is the next step in logic, for there are no innate inhibitions. In that situation the gross error made by the USS Vincennes can be explained logically. When you have been waiting for something to happen for a long time and in vain, it is very easy to begin to imagine that what you have been expecting is beginning to come about.

We can rule out tragedies of that kind completely only after the new humanitarian way of thinking has prevailed and everyone subscribes to the indisputable truth that a simple human life equals humanity on the scale of humanitarian values. We must take it as an axiom that human lives cannot be sacrificed and that a civilian aircraft may not be shot down under any circumstances. Never.

SOCIOLOGIST'S VIEW

The strategy of preemptive strike

Evgeny Morozov,
Cand. Sc. (Phil.)

We have heard a great many wise people expressing beautiful sentiments (without any irony) and calling for humanism and awareness of the greatness and uniqueness of each individual, and we have come to believe that this world is changing for the better. But it has suddenly dawned on us that in the company of intelligent and subtle conversationalists prepared to defend every human right, we have actually found ourselves in a bubble. The way of thinking outside that bubble is quite different, and its most distinctive feature is recognition of violence as a means of dealing with problems. It has also dawned on us that this way of thinking could pierce this bubble around us and our intellectual freedom could go at any moment, even as we enjoy it discussing all kinds of lofty things. The prospects of what a civilized man in army uniform can do today terrifies the whole world. I don't mean all the military here. There is a clear need for a really **new way** of thinking. The distinction is there for everyone to feel on both sides of the divide. Those subscribing to military thinking have quite a few angry words to say about "abstract pacificm." According to them, the "defensive mentality" is the ninth and truest path to truth and revelation, truer than any of the eight paths given by Buddha, and peace on earth can be achieved only in universal military terms, and not by universal disarmament.

In the view of many, the American officer who ordered a missile attack on the Iranian liner made a mistake. But was it really a mistake, or the inevitable outcome of a way of thinking and logic ingrained in trillions of brain cells in thousands upon thousands of heads?

It was said that the missile attack was aimed at preventing an attack. A curious commentary on the state of civilization today. We are a scared civilization whose bitter experience compels us to shoot first to avoid death. For as long as the rationale of a first preventive strike grips our minds, liners will be shot down and fatal mistakes will be made. I am not calling for all doors to be opened and every country to **protect** an aircraft flying over it or one of its ships. That would be sheer utopia, but even the declared principle of the military alliances that military action must be confined to response and **response alone,** if applied earnestly and in good faith, would mark a giant step forward.

Be that as it may, for the moment we are a civilization of first preemptive strikes, and it takes no effort at all to see the face of the enemy feeling the military might of the whole of civilization behind you. In antiquity, the awesome power of the likes of Caligula was needed to send Roman legionnaires on towards that small island overgrown with reeds, – "Younder lies Britain, younder lurks the foe!" The target now is a bleep on a radar display screen, and there is no need actually to see it. You can now let yourself go and mow down the reeds and enemy heads younder while you yourself stay put. Today's weapons seem to have been designed specially for those who might be put off by the sight of blood on their hands.

A general was once asked at a news conference whether he thought all his actions had been correct. "Or course," came the angry reply. Military thinking is incapable of regarding itsielf critically or mending its ways, and whenever that kind of thinking prevails, tragedies are inevitable.

Defeat or victory?

Lessons to be drawn

Alexander Pumpyansky

...Artemis with her bow, Amphitrite with her trident, Danaid with her amphora, the Nike of Samothrace. What do these figures have in common? The fact that they were inspired by the same model.

The classical statue at which throngs gaze in admiration in the Louvre did not come to be known as the Nike at once. The destructive effect of time, from whose age-old oblivion it emerged, despoiled it of its original perfection and shrouded it in mystery. Generation after generation has had to reconstruct that perfection in their imagination. Every viewer thus becomes co-author with the unknown Greek genius as he seeks to divine the logic of the sculptor's inspiration. The identities of the figures I have mentioned above are equally hypothetical forerunners of the Nike. But is this really the Goddess of Victory? Even today we cannot know for sure.

All these years we have been tormented by the problem of Afghanistan. But what exactly is it? Different answers have been given to the question, all of them mutually exclusive – "an act of internationalist solidarity," "intervention," "support of a revolution aimed at wresting the country from the fetters of mediaevalism," "Jihad." Moscow and Washington, Delhi and Islamabad, Teheran and Riyad have had their own answers. But the questions remain.

It has been called a war behind a yashmak. Only now is the veil being lifted to reveal its true face. Exactly how many have been killed or wounded in that war? How many Soviet soldiers and officers are there in Afghanistan and how many have gone through that ordeal in the past nine years? The first figures were given only recently. Until then the military authorities in the U.S.S.R. had only one stock response to all questions: In Afghanistan there was a "limited contingent of Soviet troops." Limited by what?

The formula, strictly speaking, is not altogether meaningless; it was indeed a limited mission the purpose of which was not to occupy the country, turn it into a base for military operations or the like, any of which aims would have required far more considerable armed forces.

But how did the military men and politicians visualize the forthcoming operations when they were still pending? They hardly planned to engage in a confrontation lasting twice as long as the war against nazi Germany. How precisely did they determine the ends and the means? And, of course, the cost? Was the veiled character of the war not due to the fact that, certain of their infallability, they banked on chance? The formula "limited contingent" possibly struck its authors as well chosen. It was not an army that was in Afghanistan but a faceless "contingent" – a word of foreign origin not too familiar to the general public – which it seemed quite appropriate to send abroad. The more so since it was "limited," so there was nothing to worry about. It was as if there was no war at all.

The price society paid for the lack of openness was that the seal of silence was also imposed on literature. Deaf too was the press, whose professional brief is to call a spade a spade and, if there is bloodshed, not to paint it in pallid hues. To depict the war in its stark reality – this and nothing else is the journalist's duty to society. Had that duty been performed to the full, might not wisdom have been displayed and political and moral experience gained sooner and might there not have been fewer grief-stricken mothers and disabled youths? Such is the price paid for censorship and self-censorship.

A friend of mine, an excellent journalist, recently returned from one of his numerous visits to Afghanistan. With the first column of troops being withdrawn, he travelled more than 600 km from Jalalabad, riding in an armoured carrier. He gave me some idea of what a monstrously difficult and dangerous job it is to pull out troops from Afghanistan, and even more so, to be there.

"I am going to write about the military operations in details that will make every normal person shudder," he says. "But I do not intend to analyze the political decisions taken in 1979. So long as a single one of our soldiers is there I cannot; I have no right to do so."

Him I understand. But not the journalist fraternity as a whole. The contingent of our news writers covering Afghanistan had no right to be limited. We too are to blame for Afghanistan.

The decision to send in troops was taken in secret by the former leadership. Our present leadership has the courage to take the decision to withdraw them. But we must now give thought primarily to those to be withdrawn, those who performed their duty at the risk of their lives.

However, if the conclusive assessment

FROM THE DISCUSSION AT THE 19TH CPSU CONFERENCE

Mikhail Gorbachev:

"Our fighting men leaving Afghanistan at the bidding of the Homeland, which has displayed wisdom, having acquired in these years new political and moral experience, a deeper understanding of the present-day world, and the contradictions and difficulties it encounters on the road to the future."

Writer Grigory Baklanov:

"It took both political wisdom and courage to pull our troops out of Afghanistan. It took neither of these qualities to send them in.

"The mothers of those who died in Afghanistan have written to me, and come to me in my office. I have received many letters from these mothers. They ask: how was it possible for this to have happened? Who was behind it? We know that there are even some non-voting members of the Political Bureau who only learned of the dispatch of troops to Afghanistan from the press. Can such things be tolerated, Comrades? They cannot... We must create a mechanism that will prevent such things happening again..."

Army Commander Lieutenant General Gromov:

"A great deal is being said and written in the West about our having allegedly lost the war in Afghanistan... Ill-wishers and slanderers of all kinds simply refuse to understand that we went into Afghanistan on a mission of good will. We went there in order to defend the people, the children and the women, the peaceful villages and towns, and, last but not least, the national independence and sovereignty of that country. And we fulfilled that mission. At a heavy price, but with honour."

Academician Evgeny Primakov:

"We are proud of our internationalist fighting men, and bow our heads in tribute to the fallen. And there is no doubt whatever that the situation in Afghanistan, which borders on our country, the interference in its internal affairs from without, and the international situation as a whole called for counteraction on our part in the interests of peace and stability in the region. But the nature of this counteraction was evidently determined without thorough consideration of an alternative political solution and, moreover with a lack of realism in assessing the situation in Afghanistan as well as the inevitable consequences of the measures embarked upon. All this laid a heavy burden on our country and our people. In these circumstances such an achievement of perestroika as the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan cannot be overestimated.

of what happened has still to be made, it is high time clear-cut conclusions were drawn for the future. The main conclusion, to my mind, is that Afghanistan is a lesson that underscores what must not be allowed to happen again – I mean decisions that must be ruled out under all circumstances.

Our customary explanation to ourselves and others is that nine years ago Soviet troops entered Afghanistan to help the revolutionary regime safeguard the gains of the April revolution for the country and its people.

Help to revolution is our sacred duty; we were brought up in the spirit of that postulate. But what is revolution? Is it only a matter of the intentions and slogans of its leaders? Could the April revolution, which proclaimed a programme of action worthy of the fullest sympathy, have carried out that programme in practice? Had Afghan realities matured sufficiently for a radical recasting of society?

It is wrong to impose one's own yardstick on others. Especially when it comes to military yardsticks. That is the second lesson.

Support of a lawful government and of popular movements is axiomatic, but it has its limits. It must not take the form of the military involvement of a great power in the affairs of a small country. Apart from everything else, such involvement has long proved unable to achieve the desired objective and has produced diametrically opposite results.

One has only to recall the armed conflicts that have flared up in various parts of the world since World War II: Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Afghanistan. The situations vary, but what they have in common is highly significant. In each case it has been a question of the instinct to rely on force, with the temptation on the part of one or other great power to intervene proving irresistible. The outcome has always been the same: the impotence of armed force as a means of resolving political problems has been demonstrated. I do not think Grenada was an exception to the rule.

In a nuclear war there can be no victors, only vanquished. That conclusion has been formulated and recognized at the highest level. But it is time to concede that in regional wars too there can be no victors. And to concede, moreover, what is absolutely undeniable, that great powers have no business meddling in small wars. Their job is to prevent small wars and work for peaceful solutions.

Dangerous too are surrogate wars, when arms supplied by one great power are used to fight the forces of another. That is what happened in Vietnam when the Vietnamese fought with Soviet weapons against American troops. In Afghanistan, the roles have been reversed. In a war between manpower and weaponry, manpower always loses. But only cynics will see this as success for the other side. From the standpoint of world politics these are no-win situations.

New Times had a talk some time ago with David Owen. The former British Foreign Secretary gave us a piece of advice. "Once you have decided to pull out of Afghanistan, do so at once," he said. "Take it from the representative of a country that knows something about situations of this kind." He was clearly hinting at the rich colonial experience of his country.

Alas, Soviet military involvement in Afghan affairs did give formal grounds for such parallels. All these years it confirmed, as it were, the worst accusations levelled at the U.S.S.R. – "Soviet expansionism," "export of revolution," etc. It was virtually impossible to argue the point. You cannot convince someone looking at the statue of Artemis with her bow that he is seeing Danaid with her amphora.

In politics, how reality is perceived becomes the reality itself. By its military participation in Afghan affairs, the U.S.S.R. armed to the teeth its enemies all over the world.

Photo by A. Sekretarev and S. Sevruk

"Afghanistan" becomes a stumbling block for Soviet policy in practically all spheres. East-West relations, the reduction of armaments, détente, trade. Relations with China. The prospects for a Middle East settlement. To one extent or other the Afghan crisis laid its imprint on almost everything. The settlement of the crisis in keeping with the formula adopted in Geneva, will, it is hoped, unravel these knots.

This is unquestionably a victory for the new thinking, and not merely because we are witnessing the collapse of old dogmas. The word "victory" is perhaps not quite appropriate. Nevertheless I am convinced that it is indeed a victory for the new thinking, all the greater for the fact that it was far from easily won. It is high time victory ceased to be associated with success on the battlefield. If this is the last field on which the troops and weapons of the great powers clash, it will be a victory of fundamental importance for all of humanity. It will mean one thing: that all of us – West and East alike – have at last realized that answers to complex political questions should be sought not in confrontation but in cooperation.

The Casualties

Soviet losses in Afghanistan as of the beginning of May amounted to: 13,310 dead; 35,478 wounded, and 311 missing.

(From a statement made by a Soviet military representative at a press conference in Moscow on May 25, 1988)

As a result of the undeclared war against the Republic of Afghanistan, the number of servicemen and civilian supporters of the government killed since 1978 has reached the figure of 243,900, of whom 208,200 were men and 35,700 women. Of the total killed, 20,700 were children under the age of 10. The national economy has suffered losses running to several billion dollars, the equivalent of three quarters of all investments in development made in the 50 years preceding the April revolution.

(From the speech by President Najibullah at the third special session of the U.N. General Assembly on disarmament)

Another chance lost

Why the Sandinist-Contras talks flopped

The present Sandinist authorities inherited a backward country, with a two-billion-dollar external debt. Hence, from the outset of the country's independence, the leaders of the Sandinist National Liberation Front, without adequate experience of peaceful construction, were obliged to rally the nation once again to the defence of the revolution's gains. This fight continues despite the Guatemalan accords, signed about a year ago, on ways and means of peacefully resolving conflicts in Central America.

As I see it, Nicaragua's present economic problems, such as galloping inflation, the continuing retail-price hike, inadequate growth rates in labour productivity in industry and the overall inadequately effective organization of labour, cannot be ascribed solely to incompetent economic management, as some "independent" economists maintain.

Nicaragua is part of Latin America where galloping inflation and a huge external debt are generally characteristic of all the states there. The root of the evil lies in the undeclared war that the U.S.A. is waging against Nicaragua via the contras.

When I raised the issue with Jorge Canda, a Sandinist Front executive, before the celebrations for the Nicaraguan revolution's ninth anniversary, he said that a quarter of the national budget, some 150 billion cordobas, was spent annually on education, public transport, social security and the health service. UNESCO has awarded a special prize to the Sandinist government for its successes in stamping out illiteracy. The latest economic measures launched this year are geared to the effort to curb inflation by reducing the amount of cash in circulation.

However, it behoves Canda as an executive to advertise the revolution's achievements. What do the people themselves think about their problems? At Managua's Central American University, which is supervised by prominent Catholic clerics, I was acquainted with the results of a public opinion poll that the university's experts had carried out. According to it, 74 per cent of Nicaragua's population believe the economic standing of their families to have deteriorated since last year. Yet, paradoxically, most of the people polled, 57.4 per cent, approve the government's economic programme. Two thirds believe it seeks to cope with the problems bedevilling the national economy, while 68.7 per cent support the Sandinist government's political line.

Last August after the Guatemalan accords were signed many hopes were voiced in Central America that peace would at last arrive. The Sandinist government had agreed to discuss the prospects for the future political structure of the Nicaraguan society with the main opposition forces.

Judging from the information reaching the New Times office in Managua, these talks with domestic opposition and Indian leaders initially made quite some headway. Involved in the national dialogue were 14 parties representing a broad political spectrum, from the Social Christian and Conservative on the right, to the Social Democratic and Communist on the left. Notwithstanding their differences, the two sides were heading for a rational compromise. Though the Miskito Indians were represented by the somewhat aggressive Yatama organization, it did not seem to enjoy any real independence, preferring to steer in the wake of the opposition abroad, which is dominated by the Nicaraguan Resistance (NR) organization headquartered in Miami. The contras incidentally made no attempt to conceal that they exist solely thanks to White House money.

At the beginning of this year the NR agreed to negotiate with the Sandinists. As a result of the diallgue in the Nicaraguan village of Sapoa on the border with Costa Rica, a temporary cease-fire was agreed on and it was decided to proceed with talks to secure peace. All subsequent meetings took place in Managua.

Your correspondent was in a position to follow the process of the talks and converse with some of the participants. I must admit that on the first day of the last round of talks, I was greatly tempted to telephone Moscow and say that peace had come to Nicaragua, for such was the mood of some of the participants interviewed by newsmen during those first few days. However, the talks were abortive.

It was soon learned that Enrique Bermudez, a former Somozan colonel, and one of the contras' representatives, had adamantly rejected the peace proposals. One can understand his private attitude towards prospects of peace in Nicaragua: he can hardly claim a place in the sun there. All that remains for him is to fight his compatriots. What's more, he exerts tangible power over the contras, as he controls the weapons and the money that Washington supplies.

Why, then, the talks farce, moreover in Managua? Was this merely a propaganda ploy, to indicate that the contras were prepared to enter into a dialogue, while the Sandinists were not being constructive?

No doubt the U.S. embassy in Managua knew in advance of what the last round in the talks would come to. The details of this embassy's efforts to subvert the Sandinist regime came to light literally on the very eve of the Sandinist Revolution anniversary celebrations. At a press conference for local and foreign newsmen, Nicaraguan Security services furnished documentary evidence and, as a result, U.S. ambassador Richard Melton, together with seven members of his staff, were declared personae non grata.

It appears that the U.S. embassy had worked out a programme to destabilize the Sandinist government, which newsmen dubbed "the Melton plan."

It was expected that the opposition would engage in subversive action that would paralyze all political activity. At the same time, the contras were to seize one or two inhabited localities within Nicaragua and set up a "national salvation" government that would ask a foreign power (i.e., the U.S.A.) for aid, and request recognition from its neighbours (incidentally, these neighbours had been appropriately primed when U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz visited them just before the present events).

The signal for counterrevolutionary action was to be a "march of the hungry" in the small town of Nandaime. The U.S. embassy lavishly funded this action, promising a bonus in the event of the demonstrators' "stubborn resistance."

MANAGUA

Yuri Kudimov. Born in 1953, worked as Komsomolskaya Pravda's correspondent in London after graduating from Moscow University's department of journalism. He is now New Times correspondent in Central America. The above is his first dispatch.

A state without power

Igor Timofeyev

Lebanon and its capital are divided between feuding political and religious groups. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to speak of partition.

Lebanon has been in a state of civil war for more than 14 years. Death has become commonplace for a whole generation of people that has grown up there over this time. Take at random any newspaper and you will read reports on events in Lebanon and the number of people killed in clashes, and the number of wounded that have been hospitalized.

"Reports from Beirut are as normal for the rest of the world as, for instance, weather forecasts," Progressive Socialist Party chairman Wallid Joumblatt joked ruefully. "A news report would seem incomplete for many people if at least one day passed without bloodshed in our country."

In Beirut airport, having checked your visa, a polite official will stamp the date of entry, and a customs officer will or will not examine your luggage. This is practically the only contact you have with the authorities, and their only prerogative with regard to foreigners. After crossing the turnstile, you find yourself in a country where the government has no effective power and your security and movement depend on the political forces that control a given area.

The question of who has control of the situation in a given area is perhaps most important if you want to associate with people freely without putting your foot in it or, far worse, endangering your life.

The state headed by the officially recognized president, with its parliament, cabinet of ministers, plethora of government institutions, police and even army, exists, as it were in a vacuum, largely estranged from the country and with no real power over it. The cabinet has not met for over three years and the decisions it adopts are known as "flying," because they circulate round the country until all ministers have put their signatures to them.

Zones of influence

The political map of Lebanon is often compared to a mosaic, with each coloured piece having its own specific meaning. Moreover, not only the difference in colours but also tints and half-tints determine the real alignment of forces.

Let's begin with different colours, realizing that a certain simplification is inevitable. Given such an approach, we shall see the watershed between the poles of the conflict, namely, the "green line" that divides Beirut into the eastern and western sectors.

East Beirut traditionally attracts the mountainous Kesruan and Northern Metn areas inhabited mainly by Christians. They form a territory under the political influence of parties belonging to the Lebanese Front and under the control of the armed militia who comprise the Lebanese Forces. The tone is set there by conservative Maronite leaders anxious to preserve confessional representation, which ensures privileges for the Maronite bourgeoisie.

South-east of Beirut, in the Upper Metn, Aley and Shouf mountains, lie the territories controlled by the national patriotic forces. The greater part of them unquestionably belong to the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), whose political prestige is backed up by an impressive military potential. The Communist Party and other organizations as well as independent politicians closely cooperate with the PSP within the front of national patriotic parties and forces.

The lack of homogeneity and even divergence of views on specific issues do not prevent them from taking a common stand on the main question – preserving the unity and Arab character of Lebanon through broad reforms intended to abolish the confessional system and establish a secular and democratic state.

The southern suburbs of Beirut and a sizeable part of southern Lebanon are under the control of two rival Shiite groups – the Amal and the Hezbollah. The Amal group, led by the moderate politician Nabih Berri, who holds the post of Minister for justice and southern affairs, welcomes Syria's efforts to maintain peace and order in Lebanon, and shares many of the national patriotic forces' goals. In particular, it is fighting against the Israeli aggression and occupation of southern Lebanon. The Hezbollah group is oriented on Teheran. The anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans proclaimed in the Friday sermons of its ideologists are characterized by Islamic fundamentalism and religious intolerance.

In West Beirut, and the north of the country (Tripoli and the Akkar area), and in the north-eastern part of the Bekaa val-

A lull in the shooting in the streets of Beirut.

power without a state

, the situation is controlled by Syrian ops. The northern mountainous harta-Bsherri area is the estate of -president Sulaiman Franjiya, who s his own armed formations. A ditionalist Maronite leader, Franjiya vertheless withdrew from the banese Front in 1979. At present, he critical of Maronites who collaborate h Israel and advocates the Arab aracter of Lebanon through an ex-sion of its ties with Damascus.

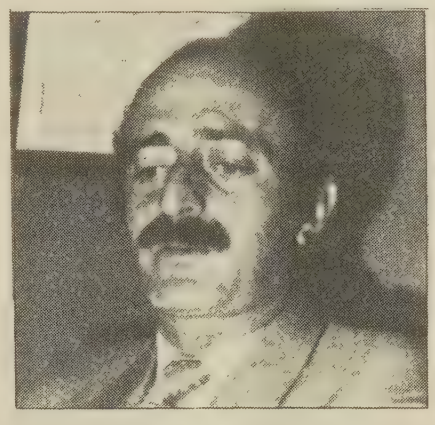
he state of Lebanon mains

n spite of the zones of influence and e appearance of new local administ-ions, it would be not only premature also fundamentally wrong to speak Lebanon breaking up into several ni-states. The obvious impotence of government in the face of a militia ned with heavy artillery and even ks is counterbalanced by the inabil- of each district and all parts of the untry taken together to dispense h the government, which remains e symbol, if not the guarantor, of the vereignty and territorial integrity of country.

Though the civil war has raged for er 14 years, the postal service works usual, and a letter sent from Saida Baaqlin will reach an addressee in st Beirut or Zgharta within a couple days. Buy the activity of government stitutions is not confined to the postal rvice. The state continues to main-n the numerous levers ensuring the bility of the nation.

For instrance, if the state failed to port fuel, there would be no electric- and the cars and tanks of the rival ups would be brought to a ndstill. No commercial transaction n be concluded without the media-n of the state, and no document can ve legal force without being witnes-d by a notary.

As before the war, the government l pays the medical bills for the fac-y and office workers, allocates funds for social insurance, and even retains food and fuel subsidies. Speculators take advantage of the situation by making wholesale purchases of cheap flour or petrol and selling them at exorbitant prices in Israel or Cyprus.



Wallid Joumblatt: democratic elections, religion is a private concern.

By continuing to carry out many of its prewar functions, the state incurs great losses, as the astronomical expenditure is not covered by revenue, especially from industry. For many years the Lebanese have not paid taxes. A considerable proportion of foreign goods are imported illegally. In many parts of the country, for instance, West Beirut, only a few tenants pay water and electricity bills.

"Wild capitalism is rampant in Lebanon," Khalil Ahmad Khalil, a member of the Political Bureau of the Progressive Socialist Party, told me. "Our economy relies to a large extent on contraband. Trade and contraband are today two sides of business. Strange things happen in a society where the central government has been weakened to such an extent. For instance, Lebanon grows enough potatoes to be self-sufficient. Nevertheless, our potatoes are exported to the Federal Republic of Germany while a certain amount are bought in Egypt to meet home requirements. Industry is also in a depressing state. In the past, its share of the national income reached 35 per cent, while today it makes up only a few per cent. As a result, money is being depreciated, and the cost of living is rising from day to day."

Having lost all hope of improving the situation, the government regularly issues a huge amount of paper money, thereby creating a spiralling inflation that would have seemed unthinkable to any Lebanese even ten years ago. Beirut bank clerks complain that the Lebanese lira is not worth the paper it is printed on. This is certainly so. In the early 1970s the exchange rate was three lire to the dollar while last spring the dollar had jumped to 400 lire.

Refugees in their own country

A whole generation of people for whom war is the only occupation has grown up in Lebanon over the last 13 years. The 17-year-old boys who form the backbone of various armed groups have seen nothing but violence in their lives. Even religion, which has polarized young people, is often sheer abstraction for them, a symbol with no meaningful content.

"The problem of the young is exceptionally acute today," Joseph Kazzi, a member of the Political Bureau of the PSP, told me. "It will be even more acute in the future, for we are having to do with a whole generation for whom social adaptation will be incredibly difficult in time of peace."

But this is only one aspect of the problem. In Lebanon I often heard that private schools, the number of which is steadily growing on both sides of the green line, may also create serious obstacles to national unity in the future. Young people leaving these schools hold such different views that they are unable to understand each other. Moreover, it seems they are deliberately programmed to confrontation and divided by the very content and direction of education.

The normalization of the situation in Lebanon is also complicated by the refugee problem. Religious polarization, accompanied by the migration of large

masses of people within the country, began in 1975-76. As a result, the demographic map of the state has changed beyond recognition.

Families seeking refuge among people of the same faith abandoned their land and other property, often finding themselves without means of subsistence. Today many of them would like to return, but this is practically impossible, because other people have long settled in the places they left behind.

The war has engendered a lot of other, seemingly insoluble, problems, but the Lebanese, noted for their enterprise and buoyancy, do not cease to hope for better times. Destroying with one hand, they are restoring with the other, and are even breaking fresh ground. The absence of foreign tourists, who once brought a handsome profit to the state, might seem to have completely paralyzed the famous Lebanese service industry. The hotel service is in crisis, indeed. But in any drowsy hotel you will instantly be served in the best way, regardless of the war.

There were only two or three other guests at the hotel where I stayed. Nevertheless, every morning I saw fresh flowers on all the tables of its spacious dining room.

"Why the flowers?" I asked the head waiter one morning. "The hotel is almost empty."

"We do not know what table you would prefer to sit at, monsieur," he replied with dignity. "Besides, it is a matter of routine, and if neglected even once, it might disappear forever."

The "Lebanese idea"

The desire to withstand the chaos and carry on good traditions till the day when long-awaited peace is restored in Lebanon is an expression of the people's daily struggle for survival, and their hope that partition can be avoided and the country, now in deep crisis, will be able to preserve its unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

How does the centripetal tendency persist in the turbulent sea of centrifugal forces? This is impossible to explain without understanding the Lebanese political tradition, or the "Lebanese idea," which has over the centuries made for the coexistence of diverse communities. Born on Mount Lebanon in the 16-17th centuries, this tradition affirmed the secular principle of government. Any person vested with power, whether an emir or a local feudal chief, had in a sense to stand above his religious community and guarantee the rights of subjects professing other beliefs.

The secular character of government on Mount Lebanon moulded a political consciousness based on the idea of the coexistence of different communities within a region where the centripetal order of the feudal hierarchy prevailed over religious separatism. This order was shaken by the first inter-communal clashes in the 1840s. The revolt of Maronite and Druze peasants against the arbitrary rule of their feudal lords was – not without the help of the Ottoman authorities and the consuls of Western powers – directed into a religious channel. This led to the division of Mount Lebanon into the Maronite and Druze areas and, later, to the establishment of a confessional system of government.

For many decades confessionalism eroded the rallying pivot of the "Lebanese idea," but could not destroy it completely. Changing under the pressure of circumstances, sometimes beyond recognition, this idea did not die nevertheless, and in the early 1950s it was revived in the programme of democratic reforms advanced by Kamal Joumblatt, leader of the Druze community.

The "Lebanese idea," which puts forward the principle of secular government standing above religious egoism instead of the system of confessional representation, was galvanized by Joumblatt in the form of the doctrine of "progressive socialism."

In 1949 Kamal Joumblatt founded the Progressive Socialist Party, which united Maronites, Druzes, Moslems and people of other confessions, and went all out for radical reforms. The bitter conflict between the advocates of a united democratic and independent Lebanon as part of the Arab national liberation movement, and the advocates of confessionalism, which ensures privileges for the big comprador bourgeoisie and leads to communal isolationism, a conflict aggravated by social and class contradictions, led to the "cold civil war," which began in the late forties and early fifties.

(To be continued)

BEIRUT – MOSCOW

Militants of the Hezbollah: pushing Lebanon back to the times of Muhammad.

Photos from the magazine Falestin Al-Thawra (Cyprus), the Nouvel Magazine (Lebanon), and TASS

Conversion. Is it possible?

New Times continues its discussion of the problems of switching military production to civilian purposes.

Under socialism too conversion is not a simple matter.
***Alexei Izyumov,** staff member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences' Institute of U.S.A. and Canada Studies, explains why.*

How to begin

Strange as it may sound, until recently the question of conversion had not been publicly discussed in this country. Yet in the postwar years it was none other than the Soviet Union that set the world a concrete example of conversion, when at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties it carried through a big cut in armed forces and armaments. This initiative on the part of this country was by no means the last or least factor responsible for the appearance of the idea of conversion in the West. (For instance, the first time a bill on preparing national plans for conversion was tabled in U.S. Congress was in 1963).

The Soviet Union's specific proposals for a non-nuclear world today, too, are inspiring the supporters of the idea of switching military production to civilian needs into action. The trade unions and a whole range of anti-war organizations in the United States are busy popularizing the idea of conversion. Support for such plans has repeatedly been stated by the biggest trade union in the country – the United Automobile Workers and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. In Britain, a national trade union committee for the conversion of the defence industry was set up in 1974 with the backing of the TUC. In Italy the trade unions have organized "workgroups" to consider the problems of conversion. Since 1982 an International Trade Union Committee for Peace and Disarmament (the Dublin Committee) has been operating and is paying a great deal of attention to conversion.

Plans for conversion are being put through at local levels. For instance, the legislative bodies of Connecticut, Minnesota and Massachusetts have debated draft conversion plans for the munitions industry on their territories.

Despite the public's efforts, Western governments have so far refused to start drawing up conversion plans well in advance, claiming that the foreign policy prerequisites have so far been non-existent. The opponents of conversion also argue that when the need arises military production will switch to civilian needs under pressure from market forces, and no government plans are required. So in the West it is the trade unions that are preparing for conversion despite the government's negative attitude. In our country it is the other way round: the government has suggested drawing up plans for such conversion, but their drafting by scientists and discussion by the public are clearly lagging behind.

It is hard not to agree with Pyotr Litavrin (N.T. 27/88, p. 18) that for conversion in the Soviet Union, an examination of the far from simple economic and social problems will be needed well in advance. Of course, our planned economy does give us an advantage. The centralized drafting and coordination of a major national programme of this kind is easier for the Soviet Union. But that does not mean we shall not come up against difficulties in putting it through. So we would be well advised to discuss them now.

Take, for instance, the problem of enterprises in the defence industry. If switched to civilian production, they risk losing not only their higher wages and bonuses but, much more importantly, their indisputable priority in getting labour, financial and material resources. And in working for the civilian market (especially under conditions of complete cost-acconting) they will have to abandon the principle of "results at any cost," which is natural to certain military enterprises, and that would require major restructuring not only of technology, but also production management and marketing. Of course, many of the executives of military institutes and enterprises are prepared to give up these advantages now. For in the civilian sector their losses will be compensated by greater economic independence and public recognition of their personal talents, which is now impossible because of the veil of secrecy that hangs over them. At the same time, for some executives of military enterprises, the transition from the production of top-priority goods to ordinary civilian ones could prove a painful process, and this should be taken into account when drawing up conversion plans.

Another important problem is that of re-training and redeploying military personnel, whose knowledge and professional experience will no longer be needed. Naturally, they will not be threatened by unemployment, but experience has shown that even those transferred to the reserve or retired are not always able to find jobs that suit their tastes and professional training. Colonel V. Kondratyev (reserve), a Candidate of Technical Sciences, wrote in a letter to Pravda "that specialists who are now transferred to the reserve or retired and who feel like working find it very difficult to find work in their field on their own." Former naval engineers and technicians came up against a similar problem when they failed to get jobs at nuclear power plants, where their knowledge and experience are needed most of all.

Another point where clarity is essential is on the question of how the money released as a result of disarmament will be spent. There are some who put forward ambitious projects for a joint flight to Mars with the U.S., or the construction of a super-bridge over the Bering Straits. But I, for one, think that we have fields where the needs are more urgent. Which do we need more at present: an international space project or better schools, a third of which have no running water and 40 per cent of which have no plumbing?

The money saved on armaments would come in very useful in resolving the housing problem and reforming the pension system.

The supporters of the "major, large-scale" projects can, of course, produce arguments in their favour. But nevertheless all such views and specific proposals should be brought before the judgement of the public. First and foremost it is the scientists and specialists who must have their say, because it is on them that the task falls of drafting and presenting in a comprehensible form their concepts of conversion, analyzing our own and other countries' experience in this field and publishing objective assessments.

It is equally obvious that an essential condition for analyzing the problems of conversion is greater glasnost in the military sphere. Of course no one is suggesting divulging military secrets. But one can hardly describe as normal the situation where we are sufficiently well-informed about the details of the defence budgets of our potential adversaries, but can only guess at similar expenditure in our own country. Equally abnormal is the fact that our press reports in detail the activities of the Pentagon's contractors, but there is practically complete blackout on our own defence industry. Perhaps this veil of secrecy was justified at one time, but today, when intelligence facilities and methods make it possible to determine the military-economic potential of a country with sufficient accuracy, that veil is an anachronism. And the Soviet leadership intends to abolish it. In the autumn of 1987 it announced that it intended in 2-3 years' time to prepare full data on our military expenditure as compared with that of the West.

The extension of glasnost to military and military-economic matters would allow the Soviet people to have a real idea of the price the country has to pay for its security. At a time of democratization and the extension of the working people's right to participate in state affairs, this would be an act of social justice. For in the final count, it is through the labour of the ordinary people that the military might of our country is strengthened.

Discussions of the problems of conversion from every angle will make it possible to take concrete steps. How the work on preparing conversion plans will go is hard to say at the moment. One can only suggest an approximate model. In my opinion it should go as follows. Each enterprise and organization responsible to the defence industry should draw up a long-term plan for its switch to civilian production. The plan should be drawn up by the work collectives (since no one knows better than they the possibilities of their factory or institute), perhaps with outside experts being called in. Similar plans would be drawn up by local authorities (in those regions where there are military and military-industrial enterprises) and by the corresponding ministries and departments, including the Defence Ministry. Then, on the basis of these plans, the central economic bodies headed by the State Planning Committee would poroduce a national conversion programme, with due count of the intersectoral and territorial indices, backed by the necessary financial resources.

It goes without saying that the national conversion programme should be closely linked to real agreements on disarmament. Since this last does not depend on our country alone, it will clearly be necessary to keep it under constant review and amend it in line with changes in the international situation. Perhaps it would be worthwhile preparing several conversion programmes to correspond with optimistic, pessimistic and normal scenarios in the development of the disarmament process.

The military believe that the army needs such training. But can it solve the numerous complex problems of educating people?
TASS photo

In the course of the discussion o conversion problems, we printe the view of a reader from th G.D.R. R. Haffner, who believe that the army is a good school o character training. (N.T. No. 1 88). His compatriot Andrea Rother of Berlin disagrees. H maintains:

The military cannot resolve al problems

Ronald Haffner seeks to portray th armed forces as a training school for th male population of a nation. But isn't it bit paltry to regulate questions of leade ship and discipline solely with the help military traditions? Doesn't that amou to saying that the education of those wh have not undergone military service pr duces no results?

Haffner takes the view that the obe ence taught in the army could solve ma social and psychological problems. Bu that is the only solution to these pro lems, where does the conscience cor in? And is the ordinary honest fulfilme of one's duties any worse?

The military cannot resolve probler where society has so far failed to do s Because if one follows Hoffner's log since all working males are subject military service, that solves all soc problems. I served as an officer in t G.D.R. army and know that it is far fro being the case.

Armed forces will cease to exist wh the state ceases to exist. But we still ha a very long way to go before that ha pens. In the meantime the only questio are: shall we be able to achieve lasti and stable peaceful coexistence? mankind capable of doing away with means of mass destruction? Can t amount of conventional armaments a the number of servicemen be reduc the world over to levels that would ma war impossible?

If we succeed in answering the questions affirmatively – and that is e sential – then our descendants will r speak of the army as a good school character training. They will fail to und stand how on the threshold of the 2 century there were people who gain ever greater insight into the laws of N ture and at the same time sought to d stroy their own species – Man.

Burning drugs on a police parade ground

Boris Chekhonin

The place is the Golden Triangle, but the story is not about the CIA, secret agents, corrupt local officials, or other familiar characters. Times are changing. Bangkok is fighting a pitched battle against narcotics.

The Golden Triangle starts here

As I stood on the vast concrete parade ground of the Central Police School in Bangkok I recalled my incredulous colleagues in Moscow thousands of miles away, and the scepticism with regard to my latest story, filed before I returned home on vacation. Are you sure the Thai police are really cracking down on drugs? Don't tell us that the CIA are helping. Next you will be taking them under your wing...

Their irony missed its mark. Their minds were firmly set in the clichés of the recent past. But times are changing. The bloody feuds between the drug barons of the Golden Triangle on the borders of Laos, Burma and Thailand, and the CIA's part in diverting the proceeds from the opium trade to mercenaries during the Vietnam war, have been covered in detail by the world media. My own story is about what a reporter can see in the Golden Triangle today.

The Thai Ministry of the Interior invited a group of foreign newsmen to attend a drug-burning session. The four tons of drugs seized over a period of 12 months had a street value of half a billion dollars in New York.

We passed through a file of troops in camouflage fatigues to reach an area of the parade ground fenced off with barbed wire. White-coated experts invited everyone to take samples for chemical analysis from any of the plastic bags piled in a sizeable mound in front of us. The red lettering on the small packages was in English and Chinese, and it identified the contents as heroin 999, one of the deadliest drugs known to date. Members of the Narcotics Control Board, cordoned off by troops, installed metal platforms and heaped opium, heroin, marijuana, car tyres and cardboard boxes on them. When they had finished we were allowed to approach and ask questions. I was told that the tyres and boxes were needed to keep the fire burning and that without them opium would not burn up completely. I took a close look at a chunk of opium. It looked solid and brown, with black spots here and there.

"Why burn such valuable stuff? Why can't you use it for medicinal purposes or export it?" "We have more than enough," explained Paisal Puanginiyom, a narcotics inspector with the Ministry of Public Health. "Thailand's own requirement is 1 ton of narcotics a year. We have special plantations where opium poppies are grown for medical purposes, and a free supply of narcotics from traffickers. This is the tenth drug-burning session since August 22, 1976."

During the first session, held then on the parade ground of the Second Royal Infantry Regiment, 1,291 kg of narcotics were burnt.

Paisal Puanginiyom said that the authorities had no intention of exporting heroin or opium. They do not want to give Thailand the image of a drug oasis abroad. The choice is between the country's good name and hard currency.

A rubber hose was connected to an orange kerosine tank. The pile on the platform caught fire immediately and soon half a billion dollars' worth of hard work, albeit for criminal purposes, went up in a column of black smoke. Peasant farmers had toiled hard to grow the

Thai troops wipe out opium poppy fields

opium poppy on plots hidden in the jungles, drug chemists had shown a great deal of ingenuity working in underground processing labs, and drug couriers had taken huge risks. What wasted effort!

Not enough jails

The ceremony was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Admiral Sonti Bunyachai. He said he very much hoped that one day illicit drugs would be banished from the face of the earth.

The Director of the Narcotics Control Bureau, General Yodmani, was more realistic: "What are the roots of drug addiction on a massive scale? Can we put the blame exclusively on social causes, like poverty? But why then is drug addiction so rampant in the affluent sections of the public in the West? Young people try to numb their loss of faith in moral and spiritual values by taking drugs. But," General Yodmani continued, "one must not forget plain curiosity, the desire to partake of the euphoria brought on by narcotics. Many sincerely believe that they can break out of the iron grip of drugs at any time, but only a very few can count on escaping after many years of treatment."

I asked the general for his opinion of the most effective way of combating drug addiction. He told me that introducing harsher punishments is unlikely to work because as it is stiff penalties are meted out. "The possession of more than 100 grammes of heroin," he said, "carries the death sentence or a very long term in jail. Drug traffickers and couriers for underground syndicates are punished especially severely, and no exceptions are made for foreigners. At the moment over a thousand foreign nationals are serving prison terms in Thailand. It is clearly impossible to jail all of the estimated half a million drug users in Thailand. There aren't enough jails. All that remains is to concentrate on therapeutic treatment and promote an awareness campaign among young people. It would be worthwhile to show drug addicts in withdrawal seizures on TV. The sight of them would put quite a few people off drugs."

Choosing between hospital and the penalty squad

I visited drug withdrawal wards in Thai hospitals where doctors are trying to return addicts to normal life. These wards cannot of course accommodate the hundreds of thousands who are in need of help. Treatment takes a long time and costs a lot of money. During the first week an outpatient pays daily visits to the hospital accompanied by his family. The rules of treatment are explained to him and his determination to withdraw from drug use is assessed. The personal details of drug addicts are stored in a computer data base, and these include resumés of previous spells in hospital. At the second stage, which lasts 45 days, patients are administered metadon, a synthetic drug, and psychotherapy and sedatives are used t try to make them forget about opium c heroin. The third stage of rehabilitatio lasts 180 days, during which regula therapy, consultations and pep talks ar used to reinforce the results attaine and prevent patients from reverting t drugs by reawakening their interest i life and teaching them basic surviva skills in the real and not an imaginar world. The fourth and final stage takes year, during which former addicts se their doctor every week. Social worker are also involved at this stage, and pa tients are monitored to make sure the do not take up drugs again. After up t two years of hard work, doctors begin t feel some hope that their effort has no been wasted.

It is wasted in 70 per cent of case though. Those who relapse have a ver short life expectancy as a rule, and quit a few do relapse, unable to cope wit the first crisis situation that comes the way. Nervous exhaustion is not th prime cause of death: drug tolerance continues to increase, until one day a k ler overdose is taken.

"I do not believe in being soft on dru addicts, as we are here in Thailand General Yodmani says. "They do it th right way in Singapore. They hav realized there that most addicts a under 30. When they learn of any your man using drugs they call him in for test. If the test is positive the young ma is given a compulsory course of treat ment, and then called up to join a speci penalty squad in the army. No nursing

ne there. Addicts get no pep talks, in-
ad they have exhaustive dawn-to-
sk training and no time to themselves
up to two years. After they are dis-
rged they are not willing to get high
more. Their own home seems like
ven after what they've been
ough, and they know that if they re-
se they will end up in the penalty
ad again.

We have a democracy here," Gen-
Yodmani shook his head sadly, "we
not afford anything like that. We
e been doing a lot of explaining
ng the peasant farmers in the high-
ds who grow opium poppies and
ijuana. We have been trying very
d to help them switch over to coffee
other crops. The Ministry of the In-
r has set up 13 training and consul-
e centres throughout the country,
t of them in the Golden Triangle. It
d be worth your while to go there,
if you do, try and visit Chiangrai.
t of the heroin that we've just burnt
e from there...

centre
he Triangle

he geographical centre of the Gol-
Triangle is located on a mountain
near Chiangrai and the Mekong
r. The other bank
he river belongs
Laos, and the
ntains of Burma
be seen from
e. The dead si-
e of this place is
et now and then
gunfire, as drug
ons wage their
s. Corpses are
ed out of the
kong after gun
les.

he director of one
e 13 anti-narcotics
res is Chumpom
gkamhaeng, 37.
raduate of the
ol of geography
hiangmai Univer-
in the north, he
been here for 14
s. He says he
made up his
d to dedicate his life to combating drug addiction among the highland tribes here. The centre has a staff of 102 professionals and 300 auxiliary workers, and they have in their care 535 communities with a population of 100 thousand. Their budget is 6 million bahts a year. "How do you go about inducing opium smokers among peasant farmers to quit?"

"The centre runs a hospital where addicts are given a week-long course. We give them water laced with opium three times a day and this turns them inside out. After the doctor has made sure they have responded he gives them shots of a strong sedative and vitamins. After a week they are allowed to go back to their villages. The elder calls a meeting and the addict pledges that he will never touch an opium pipe again. As a rule they keep the pledge, knowing from the experience of others that a pledge of that kind cannot be broken, or they will face a boycott, or be chased away, or be handed over to the police."

Drug addiction does not run high among the peasant farmers of the Golden Triangle. They do grow opium poppies and Indian hemp, but they sell their crop and smoke drugs very infrequently, aware of the consequences. The main task facing the centre is to end the long-standing custom of growing poppies and marijuana and selling them off to middlemen. Dealing with addicts is a sideline. At the centre they instruct peasant farmers in cultivating soy beans, corn, rice, fruit and coffee, and it is hoped that rubber and tea plantations will be set up here one day. The centre has 46 mobile four-man units that travel all over the area, even to the remote mountain villages. Each includes a farming expert, a teacher, a doctor, and a highly qualified social worker.

"What progress have you made?"

"In recent years people in 70 per cent of the villages in our charge have stopped growing opium and hemp, but the remaining 30 per cent still do."

Chumporn Wongkamhaeng says that reforming the mentality of peasant farmers is a forbidding task. After all, they have been growing poppies for decades. They have no experience or skills in growing anything else. Nor do they have any faith in growing anything else. A middleman would buy a crop of marijuana right in the field and pay 35 dollars a kilo. Who will travel to remote communities to buy rice, vegetables or fruit? There is more than enough in the valley.

In order to induce the highlanders to mend their ways, the government does not rely solely on what General Yodmani described as democratic methods. The army and police raid poppy fields in the jungle. Helicopters are used to identify opium fields, which are immediately burnt. Those who depend on the drug trade take countermeasures. According to the newspaper Nation, U.S. drug syndicates are now giving monetary subsidies to peasant farmers growing opium or marijuana. They also give them seeds, fertilizer, easy-to-understand manuals with instructions on how to increase yields.

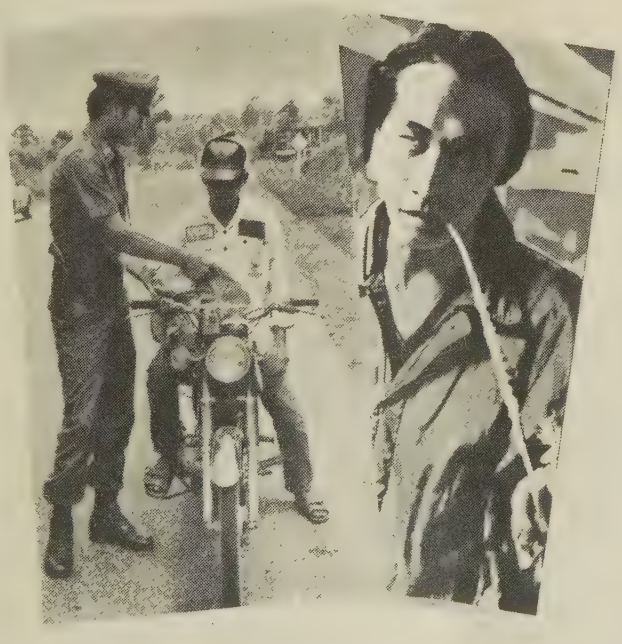
The drug barons spare no cash, but the government's anti-narcotics centres are desperately short of money. Director Wongkamhaeng told me that he needs 600 million bahts, not 6 million.

* * *

Can there be any cure for drug addiction? Could it be that this civilization will never abandon any of the vices that afflict it? The world will be a sad place if it does not.

BANGKOK

Photos by Boris Chekhonin and Newsweek magazine (U.S.A.)



Road check. A drug courier can be sentenced to death if caught red-handed. There are 500,000 drug addicts in Thailand, and so far the figure has not declined.

The Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I calls for

calm, law abidance

The road linking Zvartnotz airport with the capital of Armenia is called the Echmiadzin Highway.

The blue sky, with the tip of Mt Ararat hovering above the haze, the green vineyards, sloping gently down to the valley. Mounds of apricots for sale on the roadside, and slumbering sheep in the shade of the trees.

If I were asked where you can find a heaven on earth, I would have invited the philosopher to this valley. No, not the valley, but the road. It has come down to us from centuries long past, when churches built of age-darkened tuff lined it, with Yerevan at one end and Echmiadzin at the other.

Several days ago the road was swamped by a crowd that pulled up the cobblestones to use as weapons and cause bloodshed. There a young man died on July 5.

Report from Yerevan

The events in Nagorny Karabakh which have rocked Armenia and Azerbaijan, and have for 5 months been a matter of concern to the entire country, are well known from press reports, so they hardly need to be recapitulated. They triggered off unrest in the Armenian capital, which reached its highest point when the crowd took over the international airport and paralyzed it for two days.

What is Yerevan like today?

It is not quiet.

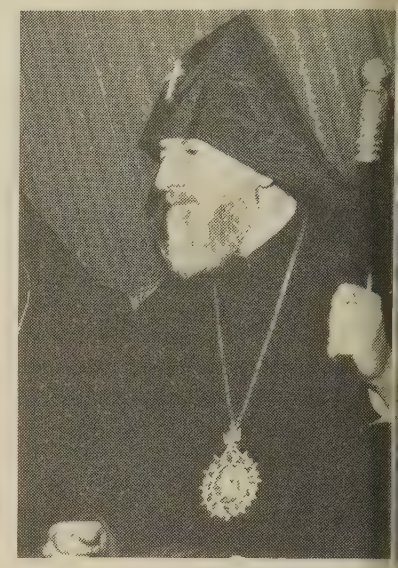
There are patrols on the streets and roads.

During the day the unrest is subdued (either because it is during working hours and more than half the enterprises are working, or because of the heat – 40 degrees C in the shade and over 50 in the sun), but in the evenings groups of excited people hurry to the squares and parks. In homes too there is highly emotional and bitter talk about Nagorny Karabakh, its wish to join Soviet Armenia, the Sumgait tragedy and the accident in Masis settlement that still remains unclear. Not only because the local TV channel is switched on. But also because the city is deeply concerned about the fate of Armenians living in the neighbouring republic, and is awaiting a just decision.

At the republic's headquarters, the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party, there is also concern mixed with a bracing spirit. All day long, mostly in the office of First Secretary Suren Arutyunyan, measures are being considered to cool the hotheads on strike, prevent the de-stabilization of life in the republic, and to keep the situation in control.

What is now happening in Armenia is not just a spontaneous flare-up of passions. One probably has to look behind the events for the wider economic and political context: for far too long many of Armenia's festering problems – both social and ecological – have remained untackled... Perhaps that accounts for the strength of the protest? There are also deliberate attempts to stir the Armenians to violence.

The figures for damages and losses from the strikes are reported daily by the local papers, radio and TV. The mass media is constantly giving them prominence, believing that they will stop the strikers. Without denying that the toll of losses and material damage is a weighty argument, I would still point out that the figures do not affect the behavior of those who are continuing to work honestly and carry out their duties. As for those who seek to de-stabilize the republic, who are sabotaging the restructuring, these figures will make little impression on them. The economy and politics are mutually connected, but the one does not equal the other. People are awaiting a political solution for Nagorny Karabakh, people want to live in peace, calm and self-respect, and these are not just econo categories...



The most dire outcome of the even that part of the country, as I see it, is the traditional fraternal relations with neighbouring Azerbaijanian people h suffered, their friendship has falte and strife between the two national has been heightened. That is the r price of the crisis, not the lost millions matter how needed they are. That is I wanted to return (not only figurati but literally) and walk down the Echm zin Highway, a sacred place for Ar nians, the place where a man wh words are heeded not only in Arme but throughout Transcaucasia, and that matter the world over, has his dence.

Interview in Echmiadzin

Historically the residence of Catholicos of All Armenians has al been in this group of churches. His ness Vazgen I granted me an audien the reception hall, decorated with A nian historical relics. The Catholicos Armenians was calm and deep thought.

nd dignity

r Holiness, what would you say
he events now taking place in Ar-
.."

eve over the sorrowful events that
ace near Zvartnotz airport on July
, as a result of the unrest, dozens
ons received body injuries. One of
s you know, died. I pray for his
d express my deep condolences
rieving family. I deeply regret that
the wounded there were the milit-

t, in your opinion, is the reason for
pened?"

e end of February by a unanim-
ision the Armenian population of
Karabakh expressed its wish to
motherland. That is a desire I and
patriots understand very well.
menians in our republic, as well as
backed the aspirations of the
of Karabakh in a unified and dis-
manner. For two months meet-
re held regularly and always with-
iment to law and order and the life
country. For everyone was in-
n his own work. Events reached
max on June 15, when the au-
s in our republic officially complied
autonomous region's request to
iet Armenia, and condemned the
es in Sumgait. That was all the
ment of the republic was able to
e time. But I know for sure that
ossibility will be used in future too
a just solution of the Karabakh
n. All the more so as the supreme
ies in the country are seriously
ed and are interested in resolving
blem in accordance with the spirit
constitution, which is based on
ip between different
ities. I should like to note that
complete unity between the gov-
of the republic and the people on
stion of Nagorny Karabakh, and I
will serve as a reliable means of
success in the future. Mutual re-
nd trust between the leadership
people within the framework of
the law is genuine patriotism, a noble imperative."

"But that has been violated, hasn't it?"

"Unfortunately, yes. I have already spoken of the discipline at the meetings of our people in the past few months on Theatre Square. But the seizure of the airport and the unrest in Yerevan in the past few days have led to the loss of much of what we gained earlier. Nothing can be achieved by lawlessness and unrestrained actions, or the storm of protests. No question can be resolved that way. On the contrary, a well-begun cause will have been spoiled, and we shall have been diverted from the straight road into the unknown. That is why I would like to express my approval of the republic's leadership, its wise, cautious and energetic attitude to the conflict. And I ask it to continue to use all opportunities to get a just solution for Nagorny Karabakh. I also approve of the Soviet army units' defence of law and order in the past months. They have defended the sons of our people, whether in parts of Armenia or in Azerbaijan, where more than half a million Armenians live. Anyone who doesn't understand this situation is a victim of self-deception and delusion."

"Your Holiness, what is your message to your countrymen today?"

"I say to them: at any price, by any means we must restore the traditionally good relations between the Armenian and Azerbaijanian people, both in Armenia and Azerbaijan. There must be no return to the black years at the beginning of the century when bloody clashes took place in Transcaucasia. Our national dignity, the fate of our people and our future should not be jeopardized by lack of restraint. A few days before this audience I received a series of phone calls from Armenian public and religious figures in other countries. They are deeply troubled and begged me to call on the people to display common sense, far-sightedness and discipline. And I am doing that. I tell them that if today they do not value their reborn country, its guaranteed existence in the multinational Soviet family, if they do not respect their own state and its leadership, do not maintain law and order and our peaceful ways, then they do not respect their ancestors, the memory of the two million Armenians who fell victim in 1915, who died hoping for the rebirth of their Armenian Motherland.

"I have heard that today there are some people who come out with anti-government and anti-Soviet slogans. As a result, Armenia, God help it, risks finding itself in danger.

"I do not want to believe that such Armenians exist.

"From the pages of your magazine I call all decent fellow citizens to promise to help me bar the way to unconsidered actions. Promise to remain peaceful and calm, to devote yourself to your daily labours in a disciplined and conscientious manner. Students, young people, dearly beloved brethren, get down to your studies so as to be ready for your future creative efforts for the progress and prosperity of our Motherland, for the fulfilment of the just dreams of our nation. Today I recall Goethe's wise words that freedom can be won only by obeying the law. And the words of the Apostle Peter – to act "as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness..."

"Your Holiness, do you regard the present events as tragic?"

"I do not want to. I believe in common sense. The Armenian people feel no hostility towards the Azerbaijanians. For centuries we have lived side by side and together. And the conflict must be resolved in an internationalist spirit."

"Has the Armenian Church taken any special action to calm the conflict?"

"Of course. For instance, three days ago I sent messages to the leaders of all the Armenian communities in the world, requesting that their assessments of the events and their actions stem from friendly feelings for the Soviet state. We have urged Armenians abroad to act in a fraternal spirit with regard to the Soviet Union."

"Your Holiness, could the conflict escalate? And what will you do if that happens?"

"I can only repeat what I said on Armenian TV when I called for peace and calm on the basis of self-respect, respect for the law and dignity. Here are my words: Armenian mothers, sisters and brothers, and especially the younger generation, do not forget the highest interests of your people and country – take care of Ararat. This is the last time I shall appeal to you and voice my behest. If you do not heed me, your Patriarch, I shall curse my fate and take a vow of silence for always.

"But my soul feels you will not disappoint me..."

The words of the Catholicos rang in my ears for a long time, even after I had left his residence and found myself in the Ararat valley on the Echmiadzin Highway – a historic road of suffering, glory, fertility; a road from the past to the present.

YURI SHEVCHENKO
New Times special correspondent

Do we have public opinion?

Or is it something that we still have to cultivate? Can we express our opinions? How can sociologists help perestroika? What are the tasks of the newly established national centre for the study of public opinion? Below the New Times interviews Professor **BORIS GRUSHIN,** *D. Sc. (Phil.), the centre's first deputy director.*

"The new centre, established under the auspices of the All-Union Central Trade Union Council and the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Labour and Social Affairs is intended to help tackle social problems in this country more effectively in the atmosphere of glasnost and democratization," says Boris Grushin. "Our society has taken a long time to become aware of the need for such a centre, looking with mistrust at the experience of Western and even socialist countries. Not that there have not been any attempts to set up such a service. The first was made in 1960 by the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda, the second, in 1970, by the Institute of Concrete Social Studies; the third, in 1985, by the Institute of Sociological Research of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. It is only now, however, that the matter is taken seriously enough to hope that the U.S.S.R. will at last have a real scientific centre capable of making a systematic and reliable study of public opinion nationwide.

N.T. Some people in the West say that Marxism and sociology are incompatible, that Marxists have never regarded sociology as a serious science.

B.G. Nonsense. Only people who have a vague notion of the ideas of Marx and Lenin can say that. Lenin described Marx as a thinker who for the first time elevated "sociology to the level of a science." In his own works Lenin made wide use of the results and methods of sociological surveys and more than once stressed their exceptional importance for social theory and the improvement of the social system.

It is true, however, that after Lenin's death sociology was downgraded in this country. Attempts to revive it in the early 1960s met with fierce resistance on the part of the numerous dogmatically-minded people of the Stalin era (even in academic circles) who continued to maintain that sociology was a bourgeois science, especially its empirical aspect. This is one of the reasons why scientific sociology has until recently been denied full official status as a source of social knowledge. Instead, we witnessed a burgeoning of various fake sociologies – the so-called pseudo- or quasi-sociology operating at the level of trivial awareness and catering to the immediate requirements of the powers that be.

I would submit that neglecting scientific sociology, which could have helped to chart the most effective and painless course for our trailblazing society, was one of the reasons why our road has been so long and tortuous, and why there have been so many abuses.

N.T. Can it be said that the establishment of the centre is a step towards a more democratic society?

B.G. Certainly. We see this as proof of the fact that the country's leadership wants to enter into dialogue with the population, and study the requirements and sentiments of its various strata and groups. As I see it, democracy and public opinion are almost synonymous. Although it will confine itself to social and economic issues, I consider the centre for the study of public opinion to be a political institution, an important element in the ongoing process of democratization. I would go further and say that creating conditions for the normal functioning of public opinion is the basic characteristic of the process. All the rest is mechanisms and consequences. Take, for example, the election of industrial managers. In the final count this is just one way in which public opinion works.

Today we see a proliferation of appeals and assurances (especially at local level) about worker participation in management. But these appeals are not backed up by any practical steps. Of course, you can say that "we have to overcome the gap between words and deeds." But today such a statement does not take us far enough. We have to understand the reason for this gap. It is clear that having committed itself to accelerating its development, our society has run into major difficulties. The nature of these difficulties is complex and involves many factors. One factor is that a well-thought-out programme of socialist renewal has yet to be developed in many areas, and we are still groping our way towards effective solutions. One little-studied problem, to my mind, is how to involve public opinion in the decision-making process. More often than not we confine ourselves to general statements about the "growing role" of public opinion and do not bother to explain how this "growing role" can be ensured. But, as Mikhail Gorbachev said at the recent Party conference, any problem of social concern must come in for a thorough discussion in order to weigh all the pros and cons. The General Secretary stressed that public opinion would play a new role in the country. I hope our centre will contribute to that.

N.T. How is public opinion to be harnessed to the mechanism of perestroika?

B.G. The first thing is to have public opinion (on particular issues). If we ask people questions they don't care about or have never heard of, they will reply out of politeness so that nobody can doubt their political loyalty to the system and their intellectual level. Can we then honestly claim that we have sounded public opinion about a certain matter? Of course not. Public opinion is not the sum total of ayes and nays recorded during a survey, but an organic product of public discussion of this or that question. We can only record an opinion that has formed in society, an opinion that exists.

Somehow, we have tended to think that only Western society manipulates public opinion. In this country we speak

moulding or educating public opin-
. But call it what you like, if you
puld opinion" without informing
pple and giving them a chance to
k, discuss, and determine their pos-
n, if we rely solely on persuasion or,
as often, imposing views on people,
at does this amount to?

We must, therefore, create a situation
society in which public opinion is
med naturally and democratically.
at does that mean? In addition to
ing the necessary information, the
blic must be interested in the subject.
erest can only appear if people
that their participation in a given so-
activity can really change some-
g.

**N.T. Without underestimating the
ential of your centre today and in
future, I must confess that I doubt
can cope with such serious and
our-intensive tasks on its own. I
uld imagine more organizations
yours will have to be brought
play. Aren't you afaid of competi-
?**

B.G. There can be no question of a
nopoly here (or anywhere else). On
contrary. We should all proceed on
basis of seeking to create a
centric multi-dimensional system
the study of public opinion that does
take sporadic probes or samplings
pinion, but studies it comprehen-
ly and consistently. This would pro-
e us with a broad and thorough pic-
.

roland, for example, is a small coun-
but it has four such centres and they
not get in each other's way.

**N.T. How do you see the system of
unding public opinion in this coun-
?**

B.G. I think it should be three-tiered,
to speak. The first tier is a certain
mber of national centres like ours,
cialized to a greater or lesser de-
e. The second will be departmental
regional centres. We need them in
e cities, regions, economic associa-
s, and ministries, especially those
ducing consumer goods or food,
h as the trade, agriculture and light
ustries. The third tier are numerous
vices for the study of public opinion
major enterprises, offices and organi-
ons.

very society must look at itself con-
ntly and closely, and use a whole
ror and not just fragments of one into
which it looks from time to time. It is another question whether we will cope with the technical aspects of such surveys and whether we shall heed the opinions established in this way.

N.T. Would it be true to say, then, that the results of your centre will be known to a wide circle of people?

B.G. Yes. We hope to launch a journal in which we shall publish the results of surveys, commentaries, discussions among scientists, writers, workers, and so on. In addition, we are going to publish a monthly newsletter. Otherwise it will be impossible to work. The findings of opinion surveys cannot, in principle, be kept secret: they must be made known to everyone in order to reproduce and reinforce public opinion. After a survey has been conducted and competently analyzed, it is necessary to publish and articulately explain (and not as is done now in the course of nationwide discussions or television song festivals) what opinions were voiced, and how often, which opinions will have to be or have been taken into account and to what extent, and which have been rejected and why.

N.T. What subjects have gained priority in your studies at the centre?

B.G. We began by looking at people's attitudes to the idea of electing economic managers in the context of industrial self-government. Before the end of the year, we will carry out a survey of opinions on the law on pensions (which will be tabled for nationwide discussion) and the proposed price reform. Mikhail Gorbachev said in his report that suggestions on this score will also be put forward for nationwide discussion. How are we to make the reform of price formation more useful for the economy and painless for the people? Opinions on these matters are extremely varied, and the survey will reveal them.

N.T. Will your centre make use of the Gallup Institute's experience?

B.G. Very much so. It is indisputable in many ways and it would be a gross error not to draw on this experience. The technology and technique of surveys, the main principles of research formulated by Gallup are applied throughout the world (in the socialist countries included) and the results are

Drawing by B. Bogorad

excellent. Why should we try to invent something new?

But of course Gallup's experience should not be applied mechanically because public opinion, as an expression of mass consciousness always bears the imprint of the national, cultural, historical and other specific features of each society. So it would be meaningless just to ape that experience. For example, over the years Gallup came to the conclusion that the best interviewer – in the context of the United States – is a middle-aged woman with higher education, a housewife with three or four children. It would be wrong to think that the same model would work everywhere. In this country you would be hard put to find such a woman. So we have yet to determine the optimal type of interviewer and a lot of experimenting will be needed to decide whether it should be an insurance agent or, say, a schoolteacher.

N.T. What role does the study of public opinion play in decision making?

B.G. Roughly speaking, three components are involved in the decision-making process in a modern civilized society. First, objective information on the state of affairs provided by national and departmental statistical services. Second, the information prompted by the immediatree experience of the administration (administrators always have a clear-cut opinion as to what is good and what is bad). Third, public opinion.

In countries where the democratic tradition is weak, not only the third, but the first components are absent, or rudimentary. Everything is based on the administrative experience of the "bosses." "We'll do as we like," says a character in Ilf and Petrov's novel. This is a classic formulation of administrative thinking with a touch of feudalism. In this country it is a universal attitude. The result is endless and unresolved problems in the field of economics and inter-ethnic relations. How can we speak of taking the public's opinion into account if our statistics are amongst the scarcest in the civilized world as far as the number of indices registered is concerned.

Of course, given other equal conditions, competent opinion surveys could even now be an important aid to perestroika in the making of important decisions. But first the administrators should understand that public opinion is not a "poor relation" asking for something cap in hand, but an ally; not a hindrance in their work, but, on the contrary, a key factor and a mechanism for upgrading their work. Public opinion expresses the interests of the masses for whose sake everything we have exists, including the administrative apparatus.

N.T. Can we hope then that when a full-fledged public opinion service has been formed it will help administration quite tangibly?

B.G. Yes. However, I am not too pleased when sociologists and journalists see the whole purpose of public opinion studies as improving the effectiveness of decision making. That is certainly one of the goals. But we have far more serious problems. I mean the emergence of a civil society, the development of civic consciousness, and a new type of attitude corresponding to such a society. Man does not live just by producing and consuming goods. He is also a "political animal." And this means more than participation in the making of decisions.

When people today talk of the recent years of stagnation they usually criticize economic mismanagement and the deterioration of morality. That is right. But the processes of decay went far deeper. As a philosopher and student of public opinion, I can attest that people's capacity to think, adequately judge and react to certain phenomena in their lives has declined. This is natural: if an organ is not exercised it atrophies; if somebody constantly tells you what to do and how to do it and you have only to carry out other people's commands you can easily lose the habit of thinking for yourself. The usual question addressed to pollster is: Will people tell you the truth? Won't they deceive you? The real problem today is, do people have anything to say? You need a certain intellectual level to lie deliberately. And if the reply is inarticulate mumbling, as we often see on television, it is a real tragedy when people cannot express their ideas or have no ideas to express and fall back on newspaper clichés and propaganda phraseology. Because of the rudimentary state of the language of civic communication in our society, people adopt a high-flown, turgid style which sounds incongruous in a concrete situation, and invariably creates a humorous effect.

To get back to our subject. Let us imagine that the numerous centres and services for the study of public opinion operate for a year, two years, three years, carry out surveys and publish drafts of statistics. I am sure that the effect of this activity would be tremendous because it would shape the consciousness and self-awareness of society and the different circles in it. There would be a chance for people to communicate meaningfully. People would learn to think, and take part in discussions, and they would talk to each other for reasons other than to ask where you can buy this or that.

Lack of communication is a consequence of Stalinism, and the post-Stalin era, the result of the strategy of imposing monolithic thinking which destroyed many elements of the social fabric. Perhaps people feel relaxed and uninhibited only in their families, and this is not enough, especially if you consider that family ties have been disastrously weakened. Communication at the work place is often confined to formal communication: do this, do as you are told. It has been robbed of human elements because people have been reduced to the position of cogs in a wheel. And cogs in a mechanized society have no need to exchange opinions. So, communication is trivialized and confined to the basic minimum of ordinary day-to-day problems. The informal associations springing up all over the country are proof that people are longing for communication. They have a great need to talk and argue, not for some pragmatic purpose but simply for the sake of communication. All this convinces me that if we want to change the situation as regards public opinion, we must revive old, and create new forms of communication that meet the requirements of the 20th century.

N.T. What forms?

B.G. Let's think together. Students of public opinion are prepared to do just that.

Interviewed by **Boris Balkarei**

ur own flag
nd language
n our common home

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian S.S.R. recently issued a decree on national symbols. It was preceded by broad discussion and lively debate. What should be regarded as national symbols? What symbols should there be? Where and when would it be appropriate to use them? And most importantly – what purpose should they serve?

Now, at the request of New Times, Tallinn journalist Mark Levin interviews **Vicktor Vaht,** Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian S.S.R.

Why do we attach so much importance to national symbols?

National symbols have existed from time immemorial. They were once believed to have some magic quality. At first symbols were taken from nature. Then they were man-made. But the important thing is that already in ancient times they united people. That function is performed by official symbols.

The national symbols were popular in the 1920s and 1930s, but for several decades since then they were practically forgotten. Nevertheless they were not forgotten, and in the process of restructuring, democratization and openness, they have come into the focus of attention. History has carried studies of Estonia's national colours – blue, black and white. The three colours were chosen by the Estonian student fraternity in the last third of the 19th century when progressive Estonian people fought against the domination of the German-speaking student fraternity against the suppression of the Estonian national identity and spirit. In time, a large part of the Estonian population, the blue, black and white flag became the symbol of national consciousness and love of freedom and the striving to free themselves from foreign domination.

The blue, black and white tricolour was the national flag of the Estonian republic in the period of the bourgeois dictatorship and, as we know from history, at times unsavoury acts were committed under that flag...

Yes, it became the flag of the bourgeois republic, although not immediately. We also remember that it was used as a symbol during the occupation of Soviet Estonia by nazi Germany; the mercenaries and punitive detachments that subsequently operated against the partisans in the Pskov and Novgorod regions were recruited under it. In this too, the nazis remained true to type, when with jesuitical cynicism they distorted the very essence of Estonian national policy. After all, that policy presupposed sovereignty and independence, and they turned the blue, black and white flag into a symbol of the subjugation of Estonia to a fascist state! However, it would be wrong to reduce everything to these pages from the past: the Estonian national consciousness took shape and matured, and their culture developed under the blue, black and white flag.

On a motion from an ad hoc commission on national symbols, the Presidium of the Estonian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution declaring that in the present climate of democratization of public life it is wholly in place to recognize blue, black and white as the national colours. The cornflower and the common swallow have been endorsed as national symbols. (They may appear on badges or pennants. A man may, for instance, carve a swallow on the roof of his house.)

The decree qualifies these as "non-state symbols." What exactly does that mean?

The state symbols are established by the Constitution of the Estonian S.S.R. These are the state emblem and the state flags, national anthem. There are also local symbols: the emblems of cities and various traditional signs. These are established by statutory acts passed by local Soviets, executive committees of Soviets of People's Deputies. The national symbols and the flag now fall into the "non-state" category.

The decree contains a clause providing for the elaboration of statutory enactments concerning the use and protection of national symbols. The posing of the question of the protecting symbols (from desecration, acts of hooliganism) is essentially democratic.

The national colours may be used without restriction, even, say, on family occa-

sions. It is also proposed to determine officially the status of the national flag and occasions when it is put up.

Then Estonia will have two flags: the state flag (red, with an undulating blue band on top of which are two white stripes, a golden sickle and hammer and the five-point star) and the national flag – blue, black and white. What about state holidays?

On such occasions the state flag of the U.S.S.R. and the state flag of Estonia are flown from the buildings housing state enterprises, organizations and institutions as well as from residential buildings. Blue, black and white flags cannot replace national symbols.

An age-old symbol of Tallinn is the Pikk Hermann (Long Hermann) Tower. The state flag of Soviet Estonia has flown over it since september 1944. Could the national flag be raised here too?

Wherever the state flag is flown permanently, the blue, black and white flag is not displayed. Thus only state flags can be flown from the Pikk Hermann Tower, or buildings housing executive committees of Soviets. The national colours, as is pointed out in the decree, are not considered state symbols. This in no way encroaches on personal freedom. Anyone who wishes can mount a small flag with the national colours on his desk at work, for example.

Today, when public life in multinational Soviet Estonia has livened up so conspicuously and all manner of opinions on topical issues are freely expressed, national symbols, you will agree, acquire a special significance. How in this social context is the very fact of the issuing of a decree on these symbols to be understood: as a concession to nationalist elements or as recognition of heightened national awareness in a climate of democratization and social renewal?

This is not a simple question and there is no simple answer to it. True, there is a clearly-defined pluralism of opinion on many current issues. But I would not reduce everything to nationalist tendencies. Nationalism is a striving for privileges for one nation at the expense and to the detriment of another. But can the striving of a nation to develop its own culture, preserve the memory of the past and be concerned for the future be qualified as nationalism?

It is precisely here that the national forces can give a powerful impetus to the promotion of national awareness at this new stage in the development of our society as a whole. Only those who bear ill will towards the Soviet state can see this as directed against the family of equal nations that is the U.S.S.R. Still I am not saying that there are no such people.

My next question is only indirectly connected with national symbols, but it too is evoking heightened interest: the status of the state language in Estonia. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. has formed a working group to study this problem. You head this group. How do things stand at present? Whereas Estonia is the first Soviet republic where the status of the national flag has been settled, the status of the national language as the state language has in some Soviet republics been settled long ago. The Constitution of the Estonian S.S.R. contains no clause on the subject of language. At the present time different languages – either Estonian or Russian – can serve as the working language even in organizations under the jurisdiction of one and the same government department.

We have several projects under consideration. The main question to decide is whether to consider Estonian the official language, the only state language, or to give it equal status with another state language – Russian. Should the republic's Constitution be amended to provide for two state languages? Another question to be discussed is this: although recognition of Estonian as the state language seems attractive and positive on the face of it, could this not have unfortunate consequences – national exclusiveness, adverse effects on the development of science and culture, and isoaltion from other republics? Such a danger does indeed exist. After all, national feeling in some of us is hypertrophied to such an extent that sometimes we are ready to withdraw into narrow "national" confines. If such an approach were to prevail in the public life of the republic it would do Estonia serious harm. I say "if it were to prevail" advisedly. A wide-ranging discussion of this subject is now under way.

I would say that the proposal to introduce an article on language in the Constitution of the Estonian S.S.R. is fully justified. And in my opinion the lack of such an article has been a mistake. Could Estonian statehood and Estonian culture develop, or indeed exist at all, without the Estonian language? Obviously not. It is proposed to go on record that Estonian statehood as well as Estonian culture are developing on the broad basis of the Estonian language.

If I understand you correctly, you are proposing to introduce an article into the Constitution not about Estonian being the state language but about the national culture and statehood developing on the basis of the Estonian language?

I personally believe this to be an acceptable approach to the question. It is a constructive approach. The definition in the Constitution of the status of the Estonian language in the republic is fully justified. In all likelihood this could be done at the next session of the Supreme Soviet of the republic. The important thing is that the relevant amendment to the Constitution of the Estonian S.S.R. should really serve to promote the development of the republic and its national culture. In equal measure that amendment should serve to cement the friendship of the people of different nationalities residing in Soviet Estonia and to strengthen the Soviet Union as a whole. Whether this conce will be endorsed in exactly the form spoke of I cannot say. Passions are ru ning high in our public life today, each i dividual propounding his own view as t most correct. So far, the most uncor promising attitude predominates: "Est nian must the the state language!" Oth proposals are largely being overlooke We must clearly define what exactly meant by the state language and how relates to the languages of the oth nationalities residing in our republ However, at present we do not yet ha the theoretical basis for a clear-cut an wer to this question. Perhaps an ad tional law on the language, in which e erything would be clarified, should drafted and adopted. We have studi the experience of Armenia, Georgia a Azerbaijan, whose constitutions conta relevant clauses, but they too are rath vague. In Abkhazia (an autonomous public in Georgia) there are even three ficial languages. Unquestionably, the cannot and must not be any discrimin tion against any language – that dang we must avoid.

This is a sphere in which hasty, u considered, unbalanced decisions a particularly dangerous. Do you agre

Certainly. Although I realize how c ficult it is to find optimal and balanc solutions here. Yet without such so tions it will be hard to move forward. the same time we must not procrastina we must keep pace with the times. W all the mistakes that were made in t past, and have not yet been altogeth overcome, we must take care not make new ones. We must not swing fr one extreme to another. Great care a much thought must be given to the bui ing of relations with all those with wh we live. Let me explain what I have mind. Underlying many of the opinic voiced on the subject of making Eston the sole official language on the territ of our republic, one can discern rese ment against Russian great-pov chauvinism. This is both natural and derstandable if we bear in mind the h tory of our republic. However, new tim have set in, and is it not in place to a are some orators not going to extrem of the opposite kind, are not they the selves becoming something of "Gr Estonia chauvinists" with regard to representatives of the other nationalit inhabiting Estonia? This too should borne in mind.

Our goal is to direct all the proces under way at present in the public a political life of the republic towards consolidation of equality and the reali tion that all the nations living under roof must enjoy equal rights.

TALLI

ietnam to withdraw oops from Kampuchea,

t that won't solve the problem

r almost nine years the international c has been used to hearing about roblem of Kampuchea. Certain inf- ial forces have succeeded in creat- he impression that by keeping its s in Kampuchea Vietnam was ing in the way of political settlement utheast Asia. So many people think if the Vietnamese pull out im- ately, relations between the various tries will improve straight away.

en in 1979 Vietnam moved its s into Kampuchea, it was not com- g an act of aggression. The crimes that all that has taken place is a simple replacement of military units. By the end of this year 50,000 Vietnamese volunteers – half the contingent in Kampuchea – will have been withdrawn, and the remaining units placed under Kampuchean command.

Now too some people will probably say that only the seventh troop withdrawal begun in June is a real one, and that Vietnam has been forced to take such a step to improve the impression left by previous "staged shows."

History has yet to give a true assessment of the myth that Vietnam seeks to establish domination in that part of Asia. A people who has gone through such prolonged and devastating wars as the Vietnamese know the real price of peace. Few nations cherish their independence as much as do the Vietnamese; an independence for which they have had to pay a very high price; an independence that can be safeguarded only when their borders are not threatened...

The Vietnamese army has entered Laos and Kampuchea several times, but never as an aggressor. It has withdrawn once the national-democratic forces in the country had gained the upper hand.

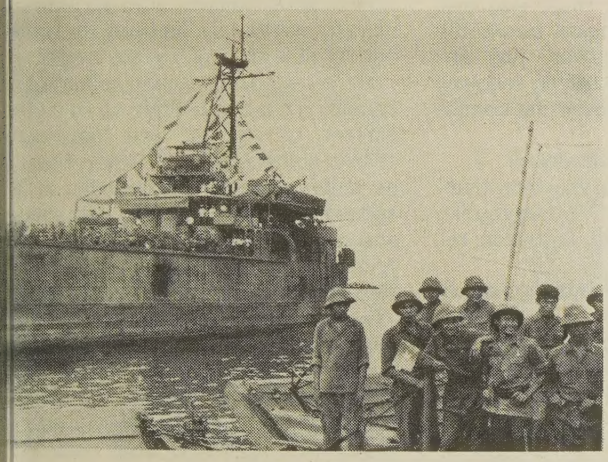
By 1990 all Vietnamese troops will have been pulled out of Kampuchea. But it is necessary for conditions to be created that will prevent the Pol Pot forces from returning to power. Yes, the withdrawal has dragged on for years, but that is not our fault. It does not depend on us.

An unofficial meeting of the parties interested in a settlement of the Kampuchean problem and the restoration of peace and stability in Southeast Asia is to take place in the vicinity of the Indonesian capital Jakarta. The participants in the first stage of the conference will be the Kampuchean groups involved in the conflict. Later they will be joined by Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

An extraordinary conference of the foreign ministers of Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam held in Pnompenh called for the condemnation of the crimes of the Pol Pot regime, and for measures to prevent any possibility of their return to power, as well as the discontinuation of financial aid and aid in arms to them. The communiqué of the Pnompenh conference stressed that Laos and Vietnam expect the ASEAN countries to refrain from attempts to turn the unofficial meeting in Indonesia into talks between Vietnam and the opposition Kampuchean groupings. After the conference in the Kampuchean capital our foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach reaffirmed that Vietnam and Laos would take part in the second stage of the Jakarta meeting.

I have no illusions that the talks will go easily. The forces opposing dialogue and seeking by political manoeuvres, if not machinations, to secure at least some of the advantages they were unable to win by military action, are unlikely to abandon their intentions so easily. One could wish them greater realism. For it is absolutely clear that the authorities of the People's Republic of Kampuchea effectively control the territory of the country.

Nguyen Vinh
HANOI



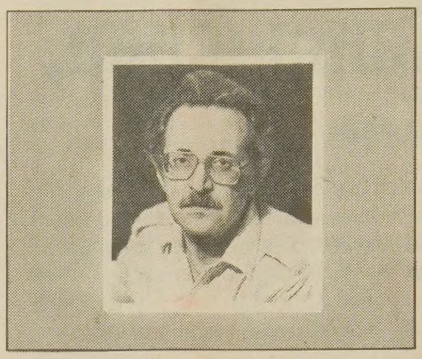
namese soldiers on their way home

Photo by A. Pin

e Pol Pot régime were so monstrous practically no one would undertake stify them. The Vietnamese troops ed Kampuchea to save the people e country from genocide and to de- their own country. However, from utset it was evident that a military nce could not be maintained indefi- . In 1982 Vietnam started the partial rawal of its troops. To pull out all s immediately was impossible, as hat been done, the Kampuchean le would have been faced with re- d bloodshed.

ere have already been 6 partial with- als. Not everyone has regarded this nificant, various doubts have been ssed, and it has even been claimed

Junior world



Never-ending repairs

Whether there will ever be a Last Judgement is something we don't know, but an eternal judgement certainly exists. An eternal judgement, and eternal arguments about the young, the younger generations, the younger world. Some people all but curse the young, speaking of them with hatred, regarding them solely as destroyers and invaders; others coldly condemn them; a third group fears them; and a fourth springs to their defence – there was no beginning to this judgement, nor will there be an end. Displeasure with the young is a natural human trait. A youngster finishing school speaking of his juniors will say: "**We** weren't like them" – he considers his own group better. One's own generation always seems better, and some people find it just as hard to overcome this age chauvinism as the feeling of national superiority. The shortcomings of our own generation seem lovable, while those of the young arouse irritation. We refuse to understand that each generation has its follies. There is only one wisdom and it is eternal, but the follies of each generation are new. Yet something remains of these follies in the eternal wisdom of the world – and as a result the whole world grows a little wiser.

Should's we stop it? Shouldn't we discard the mantles of Judges? As long as the eternal judgement continues, as long as we and the young judge each other, we are adversaries; people, however, become more humane only when they live in peace; when they fight each other they become savage. Perhaps the word "fight" is too strong. But take a closer look: we do not bring up our children, but fight their shortcomings. A child barely starts school and already he is upbraided for being slovenly, lazy and a dawdler.

If your car breaks down or the fridge is on the blink, you have it repaired. In our country, where people start repairing their new homes, having barely moved in, where everything breaks down so quickly, the repair psychology is deep-rooted. We think that anything can be repaired, even people. Especially the young. A bad child? It's a bit like a bad buy. "Well, I was just unlucky..." And so the child has to be constantly repaired, in other words, re-educated. The impression is that no one bothers with educating the young, all are busy re-educating them. I'm afraid it is the same the world over, and not for nothing is Makarenko's book on the re-education of juvenile delinquents so well known, while Sukhomlinsky's books on educating ordinary children in ordinary schools and bringing them up at home are much less well known. And in pedagogical books the horrible word "re-educator" has appeared, and people are talking seriously about the scientific basis for the correction of the individual...

The correction of the individual!

Would you, reader, like your individuality to undergo correction? Would you like your children to undergo correction, repairs?

But an individual cannot be corrected. No scientific basis exists for it. An individual can be broken, suppressed, forced into line – such methods are common knowledge, our 20th century has worked hard at perfecting them. But raising the spirits of the young, developing their abilities and drawing them into making their contribution is very difficult.

Once a teacher, no longer a young man, was showing me over a children's summer camp, pointing out: "There's our club, over there is the dining room..." "And what on earth is that?" I asked almost in horror.

"That" was a faded slogan stretching the full length of the one-storey building in which the elder children lived. It read: "Down with Sema government, long live Self government!"

"That?", the teacher replied calmly. "They are just having a bit of fun. Sema is my name. Kids must have some fun and be mischievous."

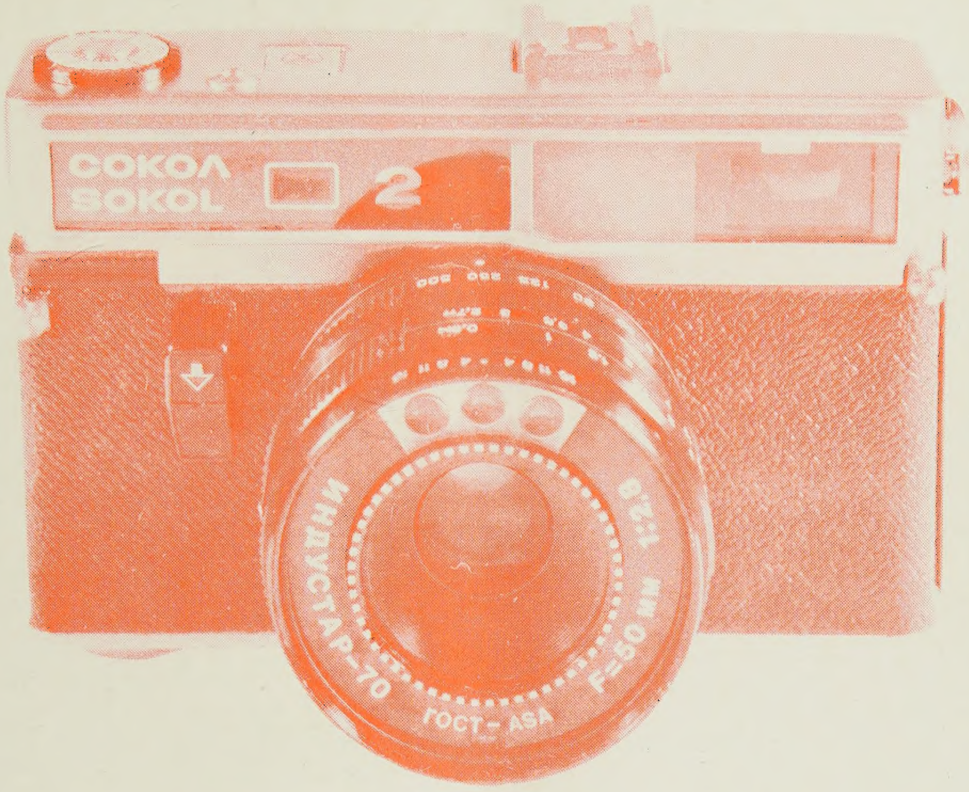
There wasn't a shade of concern in his voice. The way I overreacted probably made me look a bit foolish. Indeed – so what if such a slogan had gone up? The kids were displeased with their teacher and had made their displeasure known. And that's all. The world had remained unshattered, the house had not crumbled, and even, as I observed later, the teacher's authority had not suffered.

But the general view, a view held practically throughout the country, is that if a child is a bag of mischief, he will grow up to be a bandit, and therefore he must be firmly put down. In reality the opposite is true. If a youngster is bound hand and foot by rules, he will grow up to be unruly. If he has been given no chance to be mischievous, he will grow up to be a hooligan. If he can't make his own decisions, he will later take the law into his own hands. If a youngster constantly comes up against another person's will, if at every turn he comes up against a wall of prohibitions, then growing up for him means getting away from home, from school, breaking away from the fetters of morality and the law. And when he breaks out, no bans exist for him any longer.

Many peopole think that the formula of education can be summed up as a combination of "don'ts" and fostering a child's determination. Children have to be taught what is unacceptable in life, and their wills have to be strengthened to ensure that they keep to the rules. If a youngster does something illegal (for instance, with a couple of friends breaks into another person's home) he is asked: "Haven't you ever been told that robbery is against the law?" "Yes, he will reply, but I'm weak-willed." He is sent to prison. For what purpose? So that he can be taught what can and what cannot be done? To train his will?

That's all in vain, absurd, dangerous for the childrern and dangerous for us. That all stems from our habit of taking simplistic, superficial decisions. If your watch has stopped – get it repaired, if your son has got a bad mark at school – change his attitude to school. If he's done something wrong – drum it into his head so that he'll remember. ...And if the younger world remains what it is despite the simplest attempts to influence it, or if it only becomes worse when we try to repair it, then, instead of stopping to think, we press even harder... And so the vicious circle goes on; we lose faith in our efforts and begin to accuse the young of all possible sins. The eternal judgement continues.

Simon Soloveichik



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